

Building Community in the Crash of 2001

Juan Regache: In October of 2001 Argentina was in crisis. I had to close my business. There were no customers. I had fixed costs I could not avoid –wages, taxes, rent, utilities.

Howard Richards: October of 2001 was two months before the complete collapse of the economy on December 14, 2001, when bank accounts were frozen and nobody could access their savings or write checks. What kind of business did you have ?

Juan Regache: A bar and restaurant, the “Ellipse...” located in the mini-mall at the corner of Santa Fe street and San Martín street.

Howard Richards: Did your employees end up out of work?

Juan Regache: There were five waitresses and two cooks. I am happy to say that at this point they have all found work again.

Howard Richards: And you as the owner of the business. What did you do?

Juan Regache: I went out to sell everything that could be sold, to try to pay the debts. I sold stoves, tables, chairs, espresso machineseverything, obviously at liquidation prices. I raised enough to pay the back wages, and to pay the suppliers. What I could not pay was the bank debt. I am still on record in the banking system as a debtor. I can't open a bank account anywhere. Now with the interest charges the

finer, the legal fees, and the late fees it adds up to an astronomical sum I will never be able to pay.

Howard Richards: And did you lose money frozen in an account on the day of the "corralito", the 14th of December?

Juan Regache: Mainly I was a frozen debtor.

Howard Richards: And after you sold everything that could be sold, and paid all the debts that could be paid, and handed over the bar to the landlord, what did you do to survive ?

Juan Regache: I tried to survive as a street peddler (vendedor ambulante). Every day I walked on foot forty blocks from my neighborhood to the center of the city, to try to sell something walking the downtown streets, and at the end of the day I walked forty blocks back to my house.

Howard Richards: Did you walk because you did not have any money to pay bus fare?

Juan Regache: Yes, and also because I was angry. I was very angry. I discharged a lot of anger walking. It was good for my health.

Howard Richards: For your mental health ?

Juan Regache: For my physical health too. Many people in my situation fell into a depression with psychosomatic physical symptoms, with anger eating away at the body. There were suicides too.

Howard Richards: And your wife? Did she also lose her work?

Juan Regache: When my crisis hit, the crisis of Argentina, she was a housewife. She had worked before getting married. She had sent money from her wages to her family in Paraguay. She is Paraguayan.

Howard Richards: Was she angry with you?

Juan Regache: Not at all. A financial crisis often means a domestic crisis. In my case my wife and I struggled to survive together...

Howard Richards: ... because of necessity...

Juan Regache: ...for the survival of the family. In my neighborhood it was the housewives who organized the community meals, the community town meetings (asambleas barriales), the protests (piquetes).

Howard Richards: How many children did you two have when the crisis hit ?

Juan Regache: Three, two girls and a boy.

Howard Richards: How old were they?

Juan Regache: At the time of the national crisis of 2001 Carolina was 10, Juliet was 8, and Mariano the youngest was 2.

Howard Richards: How did you get food to eat ?

Juan Regache: Relatives and friends and later neighbors invited us to supper. Not to have supper with them as a form of social life, but to eat with them because we were walking around hungry. Even neighbors we had not previously known invited us to their house for supper.

Howard Richards: What neighborhood do you live in ?

Juan Regache: In the barrio ATE. It gets its name from the Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado. It is a small neighborhood of some 500 dwellings, counting both houses and apartments. Building it was a project of the trade union

of the workers at a nearby factory. It was a government-owned factory that made munitions. It does not exist anymore.

Howard Richards: Was it one of the many factories closed during the deindustrialization of Rosario in the eighties and nineties ?

Juan Regache: Yes, one of many.

Howard Richards: In the ATE neighborhood where were the town meetings held?

Juan Regache: Outdoors in the rotunda of Julio Marc street.

Howard Richards: Who came to them ?

Juan Regache: There were people from almost all the houses, the majority women, about 60% women.

Howard Richards: Did the single people come too, or mainly the married people ?

Juan Regache: The singles were not much interested. It was mainly a movement of older people with family responsibilities.

Howard Richards: Who called the meeting ?

Juan Regache: My wife was one of the first organizers, and then I myself was. The idea came from the news reports. There were town meetings in Buenos Aires and in Venezuela.

Howard Richards: When did the town meetings start ?

Juan Regache: In January of 2002.

Howard Richards: What did you talk about ?

Juan Regache: First about basic necessities. Electricity, gas, the telephone, work, medicine, food, clothes for the children. We also condemned the policies and the politicians that had shipwrecked the country. But the most urgent question was, What are we to do ?

Howard Richards: And was there not also a problem holding on to your houses, as in Mexico and other countries that have suffered collapse during this epoch of neoliberalism. Were people not facing foreclosure ?

Juan Regache: Yes, we did face foreclosure of our homes. But that was a struggle that came later. You had to miss house payments for several months before foreclosure started. Later there were many marches, many protests (piquetes) to save our homes. We did not get anything without organizing and struggling for it. Finally under the Kirchner government there were changes in the laws that allowed us to reschedule our home mortgage debts to the banks. But this was a later struggle. By the time of the foreclosure issue our town meeting had already formed alliances with other town meetings in other parts of the city. I was a delegate from barrio ATE to the inter-neighborhood meetings that were held in Plaza Sarmiento.

Howard Richards: Did the solidarity of the town meetings feel like an extension of the earlier solidarity you felt when relatives and friends and then neighbors invited you to dinner ?

Juan Regache: Yes. In the meetings we formed new friendships, in my case with José Domínguez and his family. They lived just 30 meters from us, and we never knew them until we formed our asamblea. Later the town meetings took on a permanent form as a Community Center.

Howard Richards: As a philosopher I think it is my job to observe that the neighbors in the ATE neighborhood repeated some steps described by Aristotle in his Politics. Aristotle

wrote that society beings with the conjugal union of man and woman, without which there is no reproduction of the species. The family, however, in Aristotle's Greece and also in ancient Rome was not precisely what we usually call a family today. Their idea of family was closer to another idea less common today but very logical which is the idea of "domestic unit" that Jose Luis Coraggio employs in his writings on the economics of solidarity. Coraggio writes of a "domestic unit" as a form of production, whose aim is to produce enough to sustain the life of its members. He points out, drawing on empirical research in Buenos Aires, that the people who cooperate in the domestic unit are not necessarily blood relatives, while those who are blood relatives do not always cooperate in domestic units. In his discussion of "family" Aristotle first quotes the Greek poet Hesiod:

"First a house, and a wife, and an ox to pull the plow."

This is a little sample indicating that in ancient Greece, as in so many other traditional societies, the material basis of life was small scale agriculture. The sort of social cooperation that typically went with such a material basis Aristotle called "family."

Then Aristotle quotes two more Greek poets, Charondas and Epimenides, who define the members of a family as "associates of the breadchest" and as "associates of the manger." I take this as evidence that Aristotle was like Coraggio in seeing the function of the domestic unit as sustaining the life of its members, as symbolized by the acquisition of the most fundamental of necessities, food. Aristotle's teacher, Plato, had already written, "The true architect of our city (polis) is our needs, and the first and chief of these is food."

The political community, the famous polis of the Greeks, was formed, according to Aristotle, precisely because the family by itself was not able to meet all its needs. The community was formed as a union of families, and the reason it was formed

was necessity. Its first goal was self-sufficiency, that is to say, the capacity for meeting all the basic needs of all the families. The political community continued its existence with the goal of going beyond the meeting of basic needs, not just to live, but to live well.

Juan Regache: We also had a primary support network in the family. Then we expanded our support network in the town meetings of the neighborhood, because we had to. The assembly turned into a Community Center, and still later the Community Center turned into a Cultural Center. We moved into a second phase after dealing with the first basic necessities, which was the phase of institutional reform. We rejected neoliberalism and we demanded that the economy be put definitively on the track of production, and not on the track of financial speculation. We demanded jail and punishment for the thieves and corrupt politicians in all areas of government and in the banks and other parts of the private sector who had brought Argentina to ruin.

Howard Richards: So you passed to “living well” in one of the senses that was fundamental for Aristotle. Aristotle taught that the life proper to a free man was public life, to participate in the affairs of the polis as a citizen.

Juan Regache: In our case not just the free man, but also the free woman, and without any kind of slavery.

Howard Richards: You mentioned that the community center eventually turned into a cultural center. What exactly is a cultural center ?

Roxana Ramos: You are probably asking Juan the question, but it happens that I have with me the weekly program of the cultural center in my barrio. It is called the “Gaston Gori Popular Library” and it is located at 7990 Juan Jose Paso street in the northwest district of the city. On Tuesdays there are macramé classes at 4 in the afternoon at 3 pesos per class. Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5 there are English classes

at 2 pesos per class. On Wednesdays there are percussion sessions at 6 in the evening at no charge. There is popular theater on Fridays at 6 in the evening, also free. On Saturdays at 4 in the afternoon there is storytelling. There is a writing workshop led by the writer Fabricio Simeone meeting first this Thursday the 6 of April at 7 p.m. There are graphic design classes on Fridays at 4 in the afternoon at 3 pesos per class. There are photography workshops on Mondays at 5:30 at 20 pesos per month. Always in the afternoons the center is open for reading the books in the library, or to play chess, or to hold meetings, or to just sit and talk. On Saturdays in the afternoons there are beginning music lessons for children age 6 to age 11.

Howard Richards: Let me go back to questions about meeting basic needs. How did you deal with the problem of the lights being about to be turned off because you could not pay the bill?

Juan Regache: If we had to we were prepared to tap into the power lines to take electricity illegally bypassing the meter. But we did not have to do this much because the governing authorities understood our problem. Electricity was one of our first demands in our protests. The government heard us. Our electric power comes from a public company owned by the citizens of the province of Santa Fe, the Empresa Provincial de Electricidad. The government gave instructions to continue service to us even though at the time we could not pay.

Howard Richards: Your experience demonstrates the falsity of the philosophy preached by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. According to the "Consensus of Washington" the government has no place in business, and the public sector should be privatized. If a business cannot be privatized, then even though it remains in the public sector it should be operated according to the same criteria used by private companies in business for profit. The truth is that the raison d'être of the public sector is to facilitate the evaluation

of the performance of the company with criteria of social efficiency, and not just with criteria of financial efficiency.

Juan Regache: For us the problem is less a question of philosophy and more a question of power. If we are not organized, we have no way of defending our interests.

Howard Richards: What happened with natural gas ?

Juan Regache: After the privatizations of neoliberalism, the gas company was controlled by a private foreign multinational, owned mainly by French capital. Since they were foreigners they had no identification with the community, with us. Since they were capitalists, their purpose was profit. If we could not pay, they had no reason to pay attention to our needs.

Howard Richards: I think we need to nuance the image of the multinational enterprises. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, made a call in 2002 for all the multinationals to operate with social criteria, and with ecological criteria, and to contribute to governability. They should recognize the right to collective bargaining and fix wages by negotiation with unions. They should not engage in or support any violations of any human rights. They should neither practice nor encourage any form of corruption. More than a hundred corporations operating in Argentina have signed the Global Compact proposed by Kofi Annan and have endorsed the principles I have summarized.

Juan Regache: Whatever the good intentions of Kofi Annan and his collaborators may be, the concrete fact was that the gas company did not do anything to help us in our hour of need. We needed gas because without gas we could not cook.

Howard Richards: What did you do ?

Juan Regache: We defended the gas meters physically. When the workmen came from the gas company to shut off our gas, the neighbors stopped them. We went from house to house to

keep them from shutting off anybody's gas. They were not able to get close to the meters.

Howard Richards: What happened with the telephones ?

Juan Regache: The telephone company was also sold to a foreign company in business for profit, with mainly Spanish capital. They also refused to help us.

Howard Richards: What did you do ?

Juan Regache: We were unable to defend ourselves. The telephone can be disconnected from the central exchange without going to the neighborhood. Most of us lost our phone service.

Howard Richards: What happened with work ?

Juan Regache: In all of the marches, in the assemblies, and in the protests, we demanded work. The federal government got a loan from the World Bank to help us with emergency work plans, the Plan Trabajar, the Plan Jefas y Jefes de Hogar, and others. They give us a small wage, a very small wage, in return for the obligation to do some form of community service.

Howard Richards: What happened with medicine ?

Juan Regache: We also demanded packages with basic household medicines. The different levels of government and also the nongovernmental organizations helped us. Since we live in Rosario we had the advantage of being cared for by the city's network of local clinics, and also by the provincial clinics. The public clinics were flooded with people because when people lost their jobs they also lost their health insurance. They were forced to go from private to public medicine. We also have to give credit to the medical doctors. The Medical Association of Rosario responded to the

emergency with a demonstration of solidarity, as did the nurses, and all of the workers in the field of health.

Howard Richards: In the dialogues of Plato there are several debates between Socrates and a series of ancient Greek cynics. The cynics argue that the purpose of every profession and of every business is to make money. Socrates argues that every calling serves a certain good. The good served by the medical profession is health. According to Socrates part of the true meaning of the word “medical doctor” is that the person described serves the health of the patients.

Juan Regache: The health workers of Rosario came out on Socrates’ side in that ancient controversy.

Howard Richards: What happened with food ? Let me just say before you answer that it is absurd that people went hungry in this nation of 37 million people that produces enough food to feed 350 million and is one of the world’s greatest food exporters. No other proof is needed that something is wrong with the basic cultural structures of the modern world. Amartya Sen has written a book making this point generally. Famines are not due to lack of food. They are due to the legal rules that govern who has a right to food.

Juan Regache: We helped each other. My friend Jose Dominguez gave me a bag of soybeans. With the soybeans my wife made hamburgers, smoothies, butter, and soybean salad. Later we organized community dining rooms where we pooled resources and served everybody who came. The community meals were almost immediately helped by food given to us by the city and the province. They gave us food for us to share. In some neighborhoods the city also organized the community meals, or facilitated the neighbors getting organized.

Howard Richards: Who did the cooking ?

Juan Regache: The women of the neighborhood. Also there was a partnership between the city and the United Nations to

help us start community organic gardens so we could produce food ourselves. The basic grains were given to us by governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and we produced vegetables.

Roxana Ramos: As a mother of two little children I myself was grateful for another city program, which was a nutrition course. They taught us how to buy all of the food that was needed for complete nutrition with a minimum amount of money.

Howard Richards: What did you do for clothing for the growing children? I suppose the adults must have had some clothing needs too.

Juan Regache: We organized a community clothing closet.

Roxana Ramos: That included sewing circles to repair and alter and share the used clothing. As the children outgrew their clothes, their clothing was recycled to the smaller ones. We made alterations and passed around the clothes from house to house according to needs. I don't know about barrio ATE, but in my neighborhood we also set up a barter system with our own scrip. It was like having our own money. We used it to trade things among ourselves.

Howard Richards: You set up a barter system with a sort of local money that you printed yourselves.

Roxana Ramos: Yes.

Howard Richards: We did that too in Santa Barbara, California, not because of a major emergency but just to give people a break who had something to give and something they needed, but who were not competitive in the existing larger market. We copied what the people of Ithaca, New York, did. You can read about them at www.ithacahours.com. Let me go back to the piquetes we have been talking about. What

exactly is a piquete? It seems to be some sort of protest that takes its name from what we call in English a picket line.

Roxana Ramos: Yes.

Juan Regache: Most typically it is stopping traffic. We did a lot of traffic stopping. Once we blocked the Ring Road that circles Rosario at the cloverleaf where it intersects with Orono Boulevard.

Roxana Ramos: Every piquete has a specific list of demands. For example, we would demand a thousand medicine kits, two thousand packages of food, five hundred work plans, according to our needs, the needs of those of us who were doing the protest. These days there are hardly any piquetes in Rosario, either because the basic needs have already been met, or because you can get what you need through negotiations without having to stop traffic.

Juan Regache: Since we were broke, down and out, we went to the protests with a certain spirit of hope. Just doing the protest encouraged us to think that there might be some light at the end of the tunnel.

Howard Richards: Was it like going to a party?

Juan Regache: No. It was not a picnic. We really did not want to block the road, stop the vehicles, frustrate the drivers, frustrate the passengers, but we had to do something because of the situation we were in. But there was a certain spirit of camarederie among the picketers. We would all cook together and share food. When we blocked the cloverleaf at Ring Road and Orono we ate noodles and rice together. In the beginning we organized the picketing ourselves, in the neighborhood town meetings and the inter-neighborhood alliance. Later we got help from left wing political movements, like the *Corriente Clasista y Combativa*. (Class-conscious Combative Current). We accepted their help because they knew how to organize and had material resources.

Howard Richards: Like rice and noodles ?

Juan Regache: Like rice and noodles. With respect to ideology, we all had our own ideas. The majority of us are pragmatists. We are not sectarian. We believe that today the road to socialism cannot be a class struggle. We want to achieve equality by bring up those on the bottom, not by bringing down those on the top.

Howard Richards: And during all this time while all the events we have been talking about were happening, were you still trying to survive by peddling on the streets ?

Juan Regache: No. In 2002 I got a work plan, with a subsidy of 150 pesos a month. Then with my new friend Jose Dominguez and my wife and his wife we got help from the micro business program of the Sub secretariat of Economic Solidarity of the city of Rosario. They gave us training and loaned us startup funds.

Howard Richards: What was your new business ?

Juan Regache: Bijouterie, handicraft jewelry. My wife had experience in that line. We also made popcorn. Jose Dominguez had experience in the popcorn business. That is a good business because the cost of the inputs is so low. You can sell a bag of popcorn for a peso, but the inputs only cost about a tenth of a peso. We put our wares on a cart and sold them in the plazas of the little towns around Rosario, in Arceval, in Carmen del Sauzo. We sold handmade costume jewelry and popcorn.

Howard Richards: And then ?

Juan Regache: Starting in March of 2003 I got work as a teacher in a secondary school, in Public School 350 of the Province of Santa Fe. I have three years of university study in engineering

Howard Richards: ...which makes you typical of the new poor in countries around the world that are reaping the bitter harvest of free market fundamentalism, who are frequently highly educated middle class people who never imagined that the economy would let them down...

Juan Regache: ... but I did not finish graduating with an engineering degree. I have been teaching classes in mathematics and physics and also helping with administration. I help with the bookkeeping, with the computers. It has been a beautiful experience for me to be in contact with the students. They are young people from 13 to 18 years old.

Howard Richards: I have two more questions. The first is whether the experience of Juan Regache is an outlier, unique or rare, or whether it is somewhat typical of the experiences of many people in Rosario. The second is whether there is anything left of the networks of mutual support and human solidarity that arose in Rosario at the time of the economic emergency before during and after the freezing of bank accounts in December of 2001, or whether the culture of solidarity has disappeared as economic conditions have improved.

Roxana Ramos: The events of 2001 were neither the beginning nor the end of the social construction of a culture of solidarity in Argentina. It is a long process of consciousness raising and education.

Guillermo Barrios: But it seems to me that solidarity is something constant, permanent, and natural.

Roxana Ramos: Remember that we suffered long years of the promotion of individualistic ideologies under Carlos Menem and under the military governments. We still have mass media dominated by foreign values. In some respects recently we have gone backward more than we have gone

forward. The deindustrialization of Rosario destroyed the old culture of work. We have been poisoned by the bad examples of people in high places getting rich by fraud and financial speculation. The charitable handouts of some of the government agencies and nongovernmental organizations have demobilized people and disempowered them. The result has often been not so much a culture of solidarity as simply a culture of parasites. And of people with a short attention span. People can get excited about helping flood victims, but if there is no emergency in the headlines they lapse back into apathy. If the problem does not hit them in the face they do not move. There are cases where young people get married and buy a television set, but they do not buy a stove, because they are accustomed to eating in the community dining rooms.

Guillermo Barrios: The sister is right. The construction of citizenship with participation and solidarity is a long historical process.

Howard Richards: At least today in Argentina, as also in Brazil, promoting the values of a culture of solidarity is an official objective of public education. It has been an official objective of the city government of Rosario at least since 1989, and perhaps since 1985.

Ángel Peralta: The biggest lasting result of the emergency of 2001 was that the middle class people learned how the lower class lives. Before they lived in a world of their own, proud, confident, separated in every way from their fellow citizens. Not anymore.

Juan Regache: I am a living example of what the brother is saying.

Howard Richards: Living, yes. But are you a biased sample? Are you a case more than two standard deviations away from the mean?

Luis “Pipo” Martínez: A great deal depends on being able to record and acknowledge the positive experiences that have happened. We need to make connections, to network, to work deliberately at overcoming the fragmentation that the past century left us as its net result and as its challenge to us. We try to do all these things through our website, the website of the Nodo Tau group. We highlight the best practices of the social organizations that exist in Rosario. There are many of them. If you also consider the families, the networks of friendship, the many personal relationships of mutual help and mutual trust, then there are thousands of little “organisms,” most of them invisible, that weave every day the web of life without which we could not continue as a society.

Howard Richards: Your group also published a book with material downloaded from your website, Desde Abajo y Desde Adentro: 100 Buenas Practicas de Organizaciones Sociales . I read your book and I found documentation of 6 cases of community gardens, 1 group of mutual aid among women, 3 cases of donating medical supplies, 2 cases of volunteer medical and dental services, 3 cases of neighbors joining together to bake and share bread, 4 cases of community clothes closets like the one Juan and Roxana told us about earlier, 4 cases of businesses or micro enterprises owned and run by their workers, and 16 cases of various kinds which could also be called innovative practices of solidarity.

Gustavo Orrego: What is important is not the numbers, but the social creativity. The workers cooperatives for example that recover and run bankrupt industries are only a tiny part of the total economy. But they are an innovative part. They demonstrate with facts that there is another way to live. They are pioneers. They are growing shoots of the norms for behavior of another world that is possible. They demonstrate the feasibility of institutions that may be much larger and more numerous in the future.

Howard Richards: Let me in any case mention a scrap of evidence that tends to confirm what we are saying. A research

team from the General San Martin National University in Buenos Aires interviewed members of 1,019 households in several Argentine cities including Rosario in 2005. The respondents were asked whether they “gave help” or “received help” from other households. The answers were:

Give and receive help:	10.7%
Give help but do not receive help	30.1%
Receive help but do not give help	9.6%
Neither give nor receive help	49.6%

The same source provides some data on the persistence of barter:

40% of the households reported that they attend regularly some form of swap meet.

Households bring to the swap meets:

--Clothing	41.3%
--Baked goods	22.5%
--Various foods	18,8%
--Handicrafts	12.5%

They bring home:

--Various foods	57.5%
--Clothing	31.3%
--Baked goods	22.5%
--Inputs for cooking	10%

(Corragio 2006)

Roxana Ramos: You know I do not want to exaggerate our progress. I do not want to exaggerate our regress either. All of us here know that in Rosario the practice of solidarity in response to the crisis of 2001 was massive. We know it from our own experience, even though “solidarity” is not a category that is tracked in the official statistics kept by the government of Argentina or by the United Nations. We also know that

although only some of the community dining rooms are still functioning, and only some of the neighborhood town meetings continue in the form of community centers, the reason why there are fewer of them is that there is less need for them. Many people continue to cooperate, not around yesterday's issues but around today's issues. Many people feel confident that in case of necessity the neighbors who helped them yesterday would help them tomorrow.

Howard Richards: Let me propose a rough and ready quantitative estimate. According to the records of the city government, there are now about 600 community gardens functioning in the city. It should be noted that in the majority of them most of the work is done by members of a single family. In the book compiled by Nodo Tau, there is documentation concerning 6 of them. That gives a ratio of 6 documented to 600 existing, or a ratio of 1 to 100. Obviously this is not an exact measure, but it may be another clue regarding orders of magnitude. If we suppose that with respect to other innovative practices there were actually 100 times as many as the ones where the reporters from Nodo Tau came and interviewed the people and listened to their stories and wrote the experience up for the website, that may give us some idea of how pervasive such practices have been in the life of the city. I do not propose this little calculation as something significant all by itself, but as something that tends to confirm what informed observers and participants say. It leads to the conclusion that innovative practices of solidarity are not a dominant paradigm in the life of the city, but neither are they marginal and unimportant. No doubt they vary day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, as the needs to be addressed vary...

Roxana Ramos: ... and as the strength of cultural norms prescribing solidarity waxes and wanes.

Howard Richards: It is easier to assess the impact of government programs. For example we could find out how many kilos of powdered milk are being delivered to needy

people in the neighborhoods. With well-known methodologies one can do needs assessments, and then one can do programming and evaluation for the efficient delivery of goods and services to target populations. But we do not go there for two reasons, one practical and one theoretical. The practical reason is that other people are already doing it. The theoretical reason is the judgment that the indefinite expansion of the welfare state is not feasible. It is necessary to look for models in which the initiatives of civil society at the grassroots level and the actions of public agencies complement each other.

Guillermo Barrios: Before we stop talking I want to say that nobody should think that the life of the poor is a life of sheer misery. At our parties we dance the cumbia santafesina.

Juan Regache lives in barrio ATE in the Southwest District of the city.

Gustavo Orrego lives in barrio Plata in the Southwest District.

Roxana Ramos lives in barrio Fisherton in the Northwest District.

Angel Peralta and Guillermo Barrios lives in barrios in the Northwest District.

Luis "Pipo" Martinez coordinates the nonprofit civil association "Nodo Tau"

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