

The REFORMA Children in Crisis (CIC) project has been moving even more quickly these days to address the an ever expanding range of immigrant needs across the country. Since 2014 when Oralia Garza de Cortés and Lucía González first raised their voices and formed the Children in Crisis project at the REFORMA Membership Meeting at the 2014 ALA Conference in Las Vegas, we have been delivering books to the children and connecting them with libraries. Our efforts have involved a number of REFORMA Chapters using various strategies. Recently, with the family separation tragedy and the caravan arrivals, angered citizens have been searching for ways to assist the children and their families from Central America who seek asylum at our southern border. We are one of the projects they have selected as a way to express their concern.

Historically, Silvia Cisneros, Past President of REFORMA flew to McAllen, Texas where she donated the first shipment of books to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) station. From there we began planning a strategy that would allow us to reach out to detention centers in Texas, shelters in California and we formed many alliances along the way. Thanks to grants from the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Believe in Reading Foundation, the Children in Crisis project has been able to purchase and donate books to various shelters and facilities across the country. REFORMA and IBBY met in Texas at the border in McAllen for a fact finding mission in 2015. On this visit we were able to donate books to CBP for a second time and to range of groups including Sister Norma at the Sacred Heart Church, the Nueva Esperanza Southwest Key Shelter in Brownsville, and the Brownsville Public Library. We also met with the ProBAR Children's Project, a pro bono immigration legal group to get a better picture of the situation on the ground at the time.

Since those early days we have been expanding our outreach. Thanks to many Reformistas we have established stronger connections with the Southwest Key shelter program and we have created links with the Kids In Need of Defense (KIND) legal program across the country. The KIND connection began with the newest REFORMA Chapter, REFORMA del Valle Central in Fresno, California, but has expanded to New York, New Jersey, San Francisco, Los Angeles and beyond. We also work with other legal offices like Casa Cornelia Law Center in San Diego where we provide books to the children and families who are visiting these legal offices as part of their immigration process. KIND in Fresno has Resource Fairs for the immigrant children and their caregivers where the local REFORMA Chapter provides books for the entire family. The Orange County Chapter, the Los Angeles Chapter, the San Diego Chapter, the El Paso Chapter, the New Mexico Chapter, the San Antonio Chapter, the LIBROS Chapter, the Northeast Chapter, the Florida Chapter and many individual Reformistas have created strong connections with the Southwest Key Shelters, the Crittenton Shelters, Catholic Charities, and more.

It makes us proud to be Reformistas when we see the support and willingness to respond to the dire situation in which the Central American children and families find themselves. We continue to try to connect the shelters and the children with their local libraries for library visits so that they can see that librarians who speak their language stand ready to connect them with the community and with books. The San Diego Public Library has been working since 2015 with the local shelters, providing library visits, crafts, book donations, summer reading programs and a wide range of other support. If your library is

interested in support from CIC for your immigration outreach to the Central American children and their families, please contact us.

In August of this year we did our first 300+ book donation in Tucson, Arizona at the Southwest Key shelter. With new grant support from the Believe in Reading Foundation we will be able to respond to even larger donation locations like Phoenix, Arizona, Tornillo, Texas and the caravans arriving at our southern border. We are constantly looking to make connections where the books will be accepted and distributed to the children.

The range of connections that we have made is astounding. Groups like the Mighty Writers in Philadelphia, PA were having difficulty delivering hundreds of books that they had gathered for delivery to the immigrant children and we were able to facilitate the transfer of the books from their facility in Philadelphia to the El Paso Chapter in Texas which distributed the books to the shelters with which they have been working. We have also recently connected with the Angry Tias and Abuelas in Brownsville, Texas. This group connects with the immigrants as they are released in McAllen, Texas and provide backpacks, pillows for their long bus rides, and coloring books. We will be providing books that can be included in the backpacks for the journey as well. At the last ALA conference in New Orleans we also organized a session titled Central American Connections in which we had a panel which included Jorge Argueta, author and founder of the Library of Dreams in El Salvador, Bill Cartwright from the Riecken Community Library which has 60+ libraries in Guatemala and Honduras, and Jenny Lizarraga from Cinco Books. More recently at the Guadalajara Book Fair we purchased books that will be shipped via the International Board on Books for Young People, IBBY, to the Central American youth who are waiting for entry into the U.S. at the Tijuana border. We are also hoping that in the coming year we will be able to organize an effort to directly help the local libraries in Central America on a number of different fronts, so please stay tuned for calls to action.

Over these past 5 years, in addition to all the PayPal donations from individuals and the grants we have received, there have been vendors who have provided us with direct donations, steep discounts, and have helped with shipping costs. Linda Goodman at Bilingual Publications was our first and strongest donor, along with TOMO Books and Cinco Books, but we have also had a many other publishers, authors, bookstores, distributors and individuals who have organized book donations. These donors can be seen on our Sponsors Page on the REFORMA/CIC web site:

<http://www.reforma.org> select CIC and SPONSORS.

There have been a huge number of people involved in making all these connections. Oralia Garza de Cortes and Patrick Sullivan are the two Co-Chairs of the CIC Project, but we have also been greatly aided by Sandra Ríos Balderrama who as the Social Media Coordinator for CIC has provided increased visibility for the project. All of the chapters who are working with the children and their families are really the key players. As organizers of the CIC Project we can coordinate the donation process, but Reformistas and other librarians in their local communities are those who are alerting us to and responding to the needs on the ground. Again, if your library would like support from the CIC Project to get books into the hands of the Central American immigrant children, whether via a local law office, a resource fair, a shelter,

detention center, bus station or at your local library, please contact us. Also, if you would like to donate to this ongoing effort, please visit: <http://www.reforma.org> and select CIC and DONATE.

Thanks for all of the support that has been provided to the REFORMA Children in Crisis Project and the children that we serve. We are all volunteers in this project and all funds that we receive are used for book purchases and shipment costs only. While all librarians are saddened by the cruel process that these children and families have been subjected to, we will continue to fight and do all we can to make their lives a little better through the joy of books and reading.

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