

CULTURAL INHERITANCE

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In 2017, ATD Fourth World invited people around the world to document real-life “Stories of Change”. These stories are about situations of injustice and exclusion caused by extreme poverty. Written by activists, community leaders, and others, they show that when people work together, real change can happen.

[Learn more about “Stories of Change”.](#)

A Love of Books

A story of how a love of books came to foster self-confidence, creativity and security for a mother and her children — tools for adult life!

By Elda Garcia (Guatemala)

In the community of Gautelinda, in Escuintla, Guatemala, a love of books flew over the mountains where, under the mango trees, we sat to read with the children.

On some occasions, the children asked us to leave the books with them and then one day, we began to bring the books to their homes; we offered to let the children and adults keep them for the week.

Dona Carlota was excited to take one for the first time. "Maybe I'll have time to read it", she told us. For a mother of seven children, it wasn't easy to find time for herself during the day. Daring to borrow a small book at first, Carlota began to enjoy reading. One day she told us that she liked it most when books had more content because it let her spend more time entertained at night, when she could finally dedicate time to reading.



New Books

The day of the week when we would go to her home to say hello and offer new books was a true fiesta in her house. At the door, all of the children would come out little by little: the smallest by her side and the older ones next to them. There, in the patio of the

house, they put all of the books in their place and we sat down.

There was one thing that I always liked to see: she took time to accompany the smallest children in their search to choose the best book, to make sure that the youngest were interested and that everyone had the appropriate book to read for the week.

Carlota was passionate about novels; in particular, Isabelle Allende's books had a special place in her new rhythm of entertainment. We knew that, during the week, Carlota read to her smallest children the books that each had chosen, and that she also shared what she was reading about with the older children. The whole family got together around the books.

Proud Mother

That year Alicia, the youngest daughter, began her first year of primary school. She had gained confidence in herself and was motivated. Carlota trusted that the time her family spent reading wasn't in vain. When we met, she spoke about the moments when the children took the books and invented stories based just on the pictures.

She was proud because her children expressed themselves more confidently and more easily, and they had better self-esteem.

In her participation in the cultural activities that we offered, Carlota noticed that her children's imagination and curiosity were developing more each time. However, all this wasn't enough for Alicia. From the beginning, her time at school wasn't easy. Her absence from the pre-primary level and being older than the established age were at the root of her difficulties. The important thing was that Alicia maintained the effort to stay in school despite her fragility.

What's certain is that a love of reading and what the children gained from it was something beyond what was learned in school. Isn't it more important, then, to develop oneself as a person and to gain self-confidence, creativity, and security? These important tools for one's adult life were there, at the heart of the family patio that welcomed us each week.



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