

HOPE: THE STORY OF A PAINTING



Painting above: La Esperanza (Hope), 2011 © Guillermo Diaz / ATD Fourth World / CJW AR0201602058

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Don Julián

When I was on working in Cusco, Peru, the ATD Regional Directors asked me to spend my last two years in Cuyo Grande, a small village in a rural area.

There, I used to go with Teodoro, an [Ally](#), to visit families living in poverty. The person who lived farthest from Cuyo was Don Julián Quispe. If you went at a leisurely pace, it took an hour to get to his house from where we lived. But at Don Julián's pace it only took only 20 minutes.

When we visited him every week, Don Julián was very welcoming and usually had a lot to say to us. Even though his first language was Quechua, he always made an effort to speak in Spanish. He knew, we discovered, a great deal about the history of Cuyo Grande.

Around this time I was paying close attention to particular words or phrases that people in poverty used. In fact, I began to write things down, thinking the words could become a painting. Then, at one of our visits, Don Julián said something that stayed with me:

- “When you have nothing to eat or you get sick, when you have no friends, no one—what we should do then is never lose hope. Sometimes we feel like everything is collapsing, falling down around us. Even then, we have to not lose hope. At times it seems like everything's going wrong for us. **But even if the earth sinks, we should not lose hope.**”

Words inspire a painting

And that's how this painting, Esperanza (Hope), was born. In the picture, the tree represents a person who suffers in spite of the beauty surrounding them. Many times we feel alone, with no will to live. The sinking planet earth illustrates those times when we just can't go on, when we feel life has lost its meaning.

The water represents life, but can also be death. Yet, in the tree without leaves, we see something that is born and flowers. Despite the circumstances, it's alive and wants to keep living. The different coloured butterflies are images of hope that one day life will get better. And the colours in each butterfly are the many different kinds of human experience throughout life. Each human being is different—everyone has their own way of acting, thinking, doing and seeing things.

Don't let others drown

Today, when so many people are losing loved ones to the Coronavirus, as Don Julián used to say, let us not lose hope. Let's not lose hope that we will forge ahead and get

through this together.

It's important for people to be united in solidarity, keeping faith that everything will be all right.

As Don Julián used to say, even if everything is collapsing around us, we have to stick together. Today we can tell the world that we are united because we want everyone to survive this disease.

I am sure that if Don Julián were alive, he would tell us not to let others drown. He would encourage us to take one another by the hand and move forward together.

This article was first published in Spanish as [Esperanza](#).

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