

EDITORIAL

Edmundo Granda [1946-2008]

The Editors

April 24, 2008: Pain and anger overcame us, our fists clenched, our eyes filled with tears and our throats grew dry. We sat, dismayed, before the blinking computer screen. The news had come that our beloved brother Edmundo Granda had died.

We now find ourselves caught between the immeasurable emptiness created by the loss of one so dearly loved and the obligation — both ethical and political — to carry on his legacy. Some will measure that legacy by the books and articles he published; others by his courses, seminars, and conferences; others by the coherence of a life spent in permanent subversion against injustice and his sharp intelligence put to the service of denouncing its hidden causes, by his call to radical action and to conceive of public health from the perspective of life. The most privileged, however, are those who count, among his legacy, the innumerable smiles and outbursts of laughter intermingled with deep debates, and the joyful arrival of the much anticipated grandson...

An elegy for Edmundo cannot avoid mentioning his humanism; his identity as a Latin American; his optimism, patience, and generosity towards the young (either in terms of age or of experience in public health) as well as his persistence, perseverance and dedication to his work.

Latin America mourns Edmundo. ALAMES feels his loss even more acutely; the organization will not be the same without him. He was

See Edmundo Granda's article "Alames turns 24" on page 166 of this edition of Social Medicine.



ALAMES even before ALAMES existed. And he will continue to live in the organization now that he has left. He nursed ALAMES, helped to set it on the right path, to get through the bad times and the (few) good times. He was with ALAMES until shortly before his death. The future is now in shadow. But it will be illuminated by his example and his legacy.¹

His academic training made him a physician, a teacher of social medicine [University of Rio de Janeiro], and a health planner [Johns Hopkins University]. He was a permanent and active member of the Latin American Social Medicine Association (ALAMES) and of the Latin American Association of Schools of Public Health (ALAESP). He played an important role in more than a dozen countries in fields related to health research, epidemiology, health-related social sciences, and health education.

He taught research, epidemiology, health planning, health, and social sciences in Master-level programs in public health, social medicine, and social dentistry in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.

He was very active in the field of health services, serving as Director of the Alamor Health Center in Ecuador; Director of the Division of Human Resources and Research of the Ecuadorean Ministry of Public Health; Consultant in Human Resources to the Washington headquarters of

¹ Franco, Saúl, "Hasta Siempre Edmundo." Personal Communication, Bogotá, April 25, 2008

PAHO/WHO (fulfilling, among other tasks, roles as Consultant on Continuing Education in Health Services in diverse countries of Latin America); Representative of PAHO/WHO in Ecuador in the area of Human Resources in Health; Executive Coordinator of the Health Unit in the PAHO/WHO Human Development and Systems Development Program in Ecuador; national professional responsible for Human Resources, Research, and Bioethics in the PAHO/WHO offices in Ecuador.

Among his main publications are: “The Study of Health in Society”; “The City and Infant Death”; “Methods of Health Research”; “Health, Society and Disease”; “The Crisis, Women, and Abortion”; “Health and Society”; “Social Reproduction and Health”; “Deterioration of Life”; “The Supply of Pharmaceuticals in Ecuador”; and “Public Health.”

He was member of the editorial committee of several specialized journals both in Ecuador and in Latin America; Professor *Honoris Causa* of the Greater University of San Andres, La Paz, Bolivia;



People’s Health Assembly, Cuenca Ecuador [Edmundo’s birthplace], 2005
(Edmundo is on the extreme left)

Honorary Professor of the “Cayetano Heredia” Peruvian University; Associate Professor of the National University of Loja; Citizen of the City of Alto La Paz, Bolivia; member *Honoris Causa* of the Bolivian Social Medicine Association; member of the Executive Committee of the Latin American Social Medicine Association, 1993-1996; member of the Executive Committee of *Social Science and*

Health, Latin American chapter, 1995-1996; Coordinating Associate of the Latin American Social Medicine Association, 1997-2001; member of the Advisory Committee of ALAMES, 2004-2009; winner of the PAHO Director’s prize, 2007; and Distinction for Merit, National Faculty of Public Health, University of Antioch, 2007.

Official Notice of the ALAMES General Coordinators: Drs. Catherine Eibenschutz and Leticia Artiles:

To the compañeras and compañeros of ALAMES in those places in our America where social medicine, public health, and a critical spirit still thrive:

Yesterday our compañero EDMUNDO GRANDA passed away. His role as weaver of ideas flourished with the accompaniment and support of all those who dream and act to transform the health conditions of the peoples of Latin America.

As a professional he chose to favor the humanization of medicine, of life itself. He explored various aspects of social medicine that had been silenced and broke with old habits of thought, perhaps repetitive, into which social medicine has lately fallen. Recently he had begun to work on a flood of powerful ideas that would allow the great ecological force of what we currently know about health to flow forth, challenging us to use a critical, alternative perspective to find another way to conceive of hope and of the utopia of health.

I would be so bold as to point out his extensive involvement alongside compañeros and compañeras throughout our America in fields as diverse as education, research, and service, as well as his extensive record of publication. These writings trace the intellectual path of social medicine in the last three decades, examining the multiple transformations that the Latin American health systems have suffered and searching for answers in spite of the segregationist measures that have been taken to destroy these public health systems. He continued to insist that it was human talent and not “human resources” which would allow us not only to survive the efforts to colonize our peoples, but even to hope for the possibility of an emancipation.

His work holds many keys to life and humanity. It traces paths which we will continue to follow.

Bon voyage, dear Edmundo, wherever you are now. We will continue the work. Thanks for all you have given us.

Dear compañeros and compañeras: We call upon you to work in such a way that Edmundo’s presence continues to be with us forever as it is now.

There are strong winds of hope blowing today in our America. We can contribute now to this blossoming. Today Edmundo placed his grain of sand within the Latin American heart, a symphony where we have always united and will continue to reunite.

Edmundo and Social Medicine/Medicina Social

The extraordinary spirit of Edmundo Granda was never more evident than in his final collaboration: the article which appears on page 166 of this journal. Although we would not have wished it this way, the publication of this article serves as a fitting posthumous tribute.

At the end of 2007, while still hospitalized with a broken rib from an automobile accident, he undertook – at our request – to revise lecture notes into the article which we are now publishing.

In April we sent him galley proofs for final editing. He answered back, once again from the hospital, optimistic that his disease would soon yield to the planned treatment. It was from his hospital bed, using his Blackberry, that he approved the final version of the paper.

Rest in Peace, compañero Edmundo. Your memory always will be an inspiration to continue the struggle for health as a human right.

The last flight of Edmundo

*The messenger pigeon has flown
With wings of silver and coral
To the other world
The world of the just!
You left us with a profound grief
Our ears awaiting
A hug frozen in mid embrace
A tear choked in the throat,
Drowning in pain.*

*Who now will bring us your messages of love?
Your hopes for the impossible?
Your well-timed phrase?*

*The brotherly glance that made one tremble?
Your unwavering commitment?
Who?*

*For a moment it flew
Your humor
Discreet laughter
Open guffaws
Now only a flood of sadness
Eternal...
Terrible...*

*But...
Your flight is not over yet.
You are one of the great ones.
And the greats do not stop to rest.
From the beautiful horizon
With the sun before us
Announcing a new Latin American nation
Amidst the cooing of birds*

*And multicolored Cuencan castes
Make your last flight
The endless flight
That will unite you in eternity
With the saints of your people
With San Ernesto de la Higuera
With the Christ of Palacahuina...*

*Brother Edmundo
Rest not rest in Death's shadows
Awaken the smiles of children
Of your grandson...
And of the Earth's toilers!
Until always brother!*

Hugo Novoa
April 25, 2008
Poem read by its author at the burial
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