



# WOMEN WITH NEEDLES: NANCY GONZALEZ



*Meet Nancy, our Barefoot Acupuncture Teacher in Cd Juarez, Mexico, as she shares about how she got involved in our project, and how she uses acupuncture on the US| Mexico Border in response to migration, violence and poverty.*



**WALKING WITH...**  
**NANCY GONZALEZ**

CIUDAD JUAREZ

*"Our mission is not only to help the people, it is to share our most genuine, most humanizing gifts with the people."*

**"I AM FROM CIUDAD JUÁREZ AND I HAVE ALWAYS LIVED HERE, IN CIUDAD JUAREZ."**



## WHY ARE YOU A HEALTH PROMOTER?

I started to see what others in my church like my mom were learning from the moxa workshops. She told me that they were going to start a community acupuncture school right there in my church.

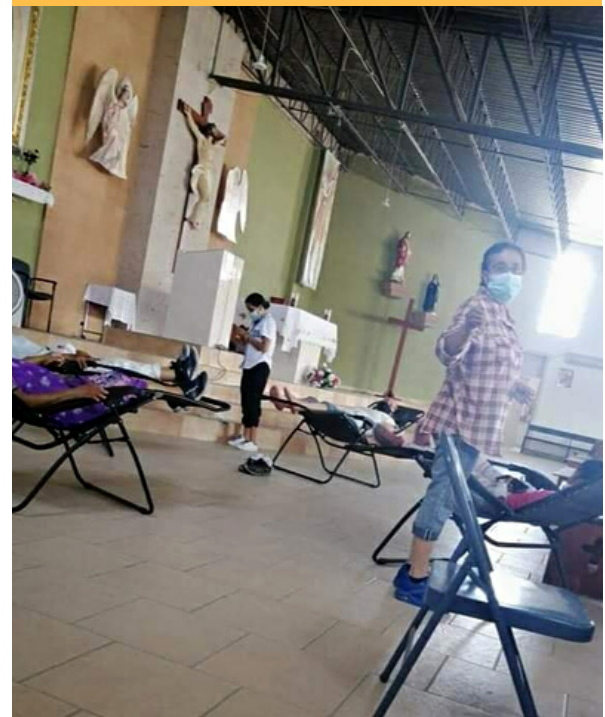
I saw many health needs in my city, in my work as a psychologist. Sometimes people do not have access to mental health care, so as a health promoter I could help more people. I saw what my mother did, and I enjoyed getting acupuncture myself. I saw the effect she had on my community, so I got excited and enrolled in the Barefoot School along with other barefoot health promoters in the church.

Personally, this has helped me to develop another vision for my community. When you're in your day to day living, you have many barriers that don't let you get close to people: Lots of codes & rules. Being a health promoter has helped me to break down those barriers. I have more contact with people, I can help them, listen to them. As a psychologist I would listen mostly, but with acupuncture I have something more to offer them.

Acupuncture also has its limitations, but as a church, our mission is not only to help the people, it is to share our most genuine, and our most human way with the people.



**Nancy and her mother, Rosario at their Church, Santa Margarita**







## Tell us a little about your neighborhood

There are three neighborhoods, this street is Constituents, you pass the street and it is Mexico 68, you pass the other and it is Mexican Revolution. They are three very close neighborhoods that share various problems.

This neighborhood has gone through very difficult situations of violence and drugs, educational deficits. Due to many problems of social insecurity, in our church we began we see people come who had been kidnapped, or whom had lost a loved one. Some even lost their children in this horrific reckoning that took place in Juarez, impacted by drug trafficking. This is the biggest social problem. It is a situation where people live in poverty. But the people are also very hard-working.

In the México 68 neighborhood it is very common to meet people who are immigrants to our border city. Many people here are from Torreón, from Veracruz and Chiapas, who all came to work in factories, or maquilas. This industry has become the economic foundation of our community, but it also has created a vulnerability among these migrants. People came to find something better, to find work. But they also found violence. Not all people who come here even end up with a stable job, either.



Today, here are still massacres and high rates of homicide. In our church's Sunday school "Catechism," there are some children whose father was in jail and their mother was killed. One of the nuns in our church helped them relocate to live with their own relatives. This is an example of the dimension of the problems that exist.

There have been times recently when you would just see dead bodies on the street. It got to the point where we became so desensitized to the violence that we would just have a seat outside our homes and watched as the police and detectives did their jobs right in front of our homes.

One patient of ours had been kidnapped and she came to us with symptoms of post-traumatic stress. She would have nightmares, could not sleep, and a lot of fear. We started by just offering her the NADA ear acupuncture protocol. She woke up at night disturbed, sleep disorders, fear, treatment at the beginning only the NADA protocol. We would start with those ear points until the patients felt more safe with other points in other parts of their body.





In the face of different health problems, we offer some simple treatments, along with a treatment plan according to the needs that they have. The primary types of acupuncture we offer are the NADA protocol and community acupuncture.

### **What is the difference between the NADA protocol and community acupuncture?**

With the NADA protocol, points are applied only to the ear. It is used for addictions, emotional problems, post-traumatic stress. Many other health problems have a base, or root, in one of these areas. Our philosophy is if we attend to the root of the problem, we can have an impact on the person's entire health status.

And with community acupuncture we use points in the arms and legs and the head as well. All sessions are done in a group environment. With a brief interview with the person, we can determine which are the best points to use in the given situation.



## The history of the community and Nancy's church health dispensary

Before this church belonged to another parish, and when I first came here there was nothing. This sector of the city was a garbage dump, where the city just threw trash away at. Neighbors told us: "The grocery store is going to throw away its waste here," and as kids we would rush out and see what they could salvage for their families. Later, little by little people moved until it became over- populated. When we first came to this church we sat on rocks in a big vacant lot. People would bring their own chairs or block to sit on. We sat down and listened to mass outdoors. Later, a congregation of priests came from the United States, the Maryknolls, they helped to build the chapel. And eventually the nuns started a health dispensary, where we offer acupuncture.



Our health dispensary began long before we started Barefoot Health Promoters in 2015. But our new school gave us a more formal way of organizing. When we began to offer community acupuncture, people from the church volunteered to try it out.

We don't charge, but we accept donations. Those who can donate help us towards purchasing supplies. Those who do not have any money to give can still get acupuncture. It all works out so that anyone in our community can get acupuncture.

We have not stopped, we only closed last year for a brief time period due to the pandemic. Right now we are open on Saturdays from 9:30 to 1:00.

We invite people from the parish, we go to the chapels, and at the end of mass we offer acupuncture so people can try it out. When there is a sick person who cannot get out of his bed, we also offer this service in their home. Our priest hears of people who are home-bound and asks us to help go offer acupuncture.

Now in winter we have about seven to ten people a day. When it is summer it increases to 20. At other times we get to have thirty in one day, since the pandemic it has taken a bit of work.



**OUR PRIEST HEARS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE HOME-BOUND AND ASKS US TO HELP GO OFFER ACUPUNCTURE.**







## Difficulties of being a health promoter

We depend on the community, people something very simple that we can solve with a few needles. Others have very complex problems. Sometimes we have to fight for space within the church. Each parish offers many services. I have had to advocate saying that we use that room at such times, so that it is authorized by our priest, and so we can share our space with the rest of the community.

**In 2011, we were invited by groups in Cd Juarez, Mexico, to help respond to violence in the region. Today, our Barefoot Health Promoters serve marginalized neighborhoods and migrant shelters in the former murder capital of the world. The first free-tuition community acupuncture school in the world was founded in 2015, through the Catholic Diocese of Cd. Juarez, Mexico. Our fundraiser this year is for this grassroots women-led project.**

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