

# Greetings from 2012 Troubadour

## *Ben Schwartz in Honduras!*

Thanks to the generous support of Project Troubadour, I have spent the last three weeks here building, augmenting, and checking in on community radio stations from the mountains of Santa Barbara to the Caribbean coast of Colon. The stations promotion of art and culture is critical in a country that is rich in cultural heritage but has little to no funding for the arts. Of little help is its status as the second poorest country in the hemisphere and its government is suffering from a recent coup d'etat, corruption, and bankruptcy .

The radio station we set up three years ago on Christmas in the mountain town of Las Cebitas is thriving despite its complete dependence on solar panels and car batteries! Because there is no electricity in the area, Radio La Voz Indigenous Lenca has almost universal listenership due to no television in the area. It is a fantastic promoter of local art and culture including giving exposure to a violin player whose instrument was made locally and promoting craftwork such as the ancient art of Lenca bowl making. It reaches many small coffee growing towns in the area with its simple handmade antenna due to its high altitude.

Radio Amanecer (radio sunrise) in La Vega, Santa Barbara is going strong having fundraised independently after the initial donation of the radio transmitter and a solar panel to secure a computer, a 100 foot antenna tower, a concrete studio and a piece of land in the center of town. The local music and news broadcasts start at 5:00 a.m. to reach the first bus riders heading to town. I am also working with Radio Amanecer to promote a local youth DJ who was recently immobilized in a motorcycle accident and wishes to spend his time on the air sharing local music and news with other local youth.

We set up Radio Waruguma last year with Project Troubadour funds in the Garifuna neighborhood of Barrio Crystals in the old capital of Honduras Trujillo on the shores of the Caribbean. Actually the front yard of the station is used by small scale local fisherman to launch their handmade, human-powered fishing boats out to sea, an industry that has continued much the same for the last 500 years. Radio Waruguma is a strong promoter of the Garifuna music and culture, frequently creating broadcasts in the traditional Garifuna language and airing recordings of traditional Garifuna drumbeats and songs from local ceremonies. Project Troubadour has donated two tape recorders and a digital recorder to document and air such events to the local community with the goal of passing on the Garifuna culture to the next generation. The local organization OFRANEH (the black brotherhood of Honduras) has been very successful at accomplishing this. Despite challenges, director Everisto Perez has introduced two different youth groups to create programs for the radio. One challenge we encountered last year with Radio Waruguma was that although the radio signals were traveling 10 miles away to the other side of the bay of Trujillo, they were not able to reach up the hill from the station to the central park in town. With the help of Project Troubadour we have purchased the parts to build a radio amplifier that multiplies the stations strength by 15 times which easily covers the center of town.

Radio Juventud (Radio Youth) is the latest station to be set up with the help of Project Troubadour. The local community raised \$300 - not an easy feat given the current economic climate of Honduras. Project Troubadour has covered my travel expenses to bring the equipment here in order to put the station together. Radio Juventud is located in the large mining town of Las Vegas, Santa Barbara. Through local connections we founded Radio Juventud and situated it inside of the local high school. The students will vote on a more permanent name for their station truly making it *their* radio. With the help of a local technician who works setting up radio communications in the mine, we were able to achieve a fantastic signal for the station. We were able to reach all the neighborhoods in the valley where the Las Vegas is located including some communities positioned above the stations antenna - a rarity in the occupation. Working with the local teachers and administrators, we look forward to this station promoting youth musicians and writers. This is a rare window of exposure for student writers and music makers.

On behalf of many local communities in Honduras, we give much thanks to Project Troubadour!