

Amapola.Periodismo Project  
Photographic exhibit, presentation and community dialogues  
Projected date: May 5, 2022 (Cinco de Mayo)

## Background

Amapola.Periodismo Transgresor is an independent digital media site collective based in Chilpancingo, the capitol of the state of Guerrero, located in the southern region of México.

Guerrero is world-famous for its coastal and tourist destinations such as Acapulco, Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, and Taxco. Contrastingly, there are *pueblos originarios*\* in the mountains, Costa Chica and Costa Grande regions with the highest poverty, violence, and human displacement rates in the country.

Guerrero is also the state, which became infamous the night of September 26, 2014, when a group of Education students from the Raul Isidro Burgos Rural Normal School in Ayotzinapa (the River of Small Squash) were assaulted and where 43 of them continue to be *desaparecidos*\* and unaccounted for.

La Colectiva tells the story about how national and foreign press sent to cover the Ayotzinapa crime relied on them; however, they felt these colleagues were extracting information without returning due credit --“[extractivism without reciprocity.](#)” In May 2019, they decided to unveil [Amapola.Periodismo Transgresor](#) and began *reporteando*. Amapola (*Papaver somniferum*, the opium poppy) has been cultivated in those mountains for many centuries supplying both controlled and uncontrolled opiated medication to the world. “We’re sick and tired of being signified by the presence of an illegal crop.”

\*Desaparecido(a) is a label given by the Mexican State to any person who was forcefully kidnapped, either by the State, criminal organizations, or known acquaintances, without any knowledge of their whereabouts. As of 2021, there were more than 90,000 *desaparecidos* and unaccounted for in México.

\* Pueblos originarios are communities of Nahuatl and Mixteco-Tu’Un Savi speakers who have ancestral and millenary histories in these mountains and coastal regions. There is also a considerable number of Afro-Mexican communities in the southern coastal region.

## [Who are we?](#)

Amapola. Periodismo transgresor is a space built by journalist from the state of Guerrero. It is a platform born from the necessity of searching for truths while questioning the world we dwell from a journalistic perspective, primarily in our own milieu. The bet is to generate a dialogue, for our readers to take journalism as a public good and together build our pathways. Our objectives are to expose the structural violence that threatens against the citizenship and to provide the people the necessary tools to make better decisions. Our offer is to dismantle the official narrative that all of the problems we live under have a direct correlation to the name of our site. Amapola is a flower, the origins of our problems are corruption and impunity.

Amapola section headings receive interesting titles: paz (peace), naturaleza (nature), el topo (the mole), otredad (otherness), COVID-19, Las Tortugas Pueden Volar (Turtles Can Fly) is a permanent monthly covering Ayotzinapa’s anniversary, De Aquí Soy (I am from here) featuring Guerrero’s artists and cultural workers, as Marlén Castro explains, by covering peace, the arts, culture, and folks positively impacting their communities, “we need to create a balance to alleviate all the negative.”

## DE BUENA FE (In Good Faith)

After watching Marlén Castro on a México City TV interview in a program called [De Buena Fe \(In Good Faith\)](#), I contacted her to congratulate them on their work and to offer personal support. Marlén explained Amapola organizes a bi-annual fundraising drive by offering a series of photographs in a collection called [“Una Foto por La Libertad” \(A Photo for Freedom\)](#). Several of these photographs were donated by professional photo-journalists working throughout México, others are from their own collective. Marlén told me, “we are doing the exhibit and photographic offering in favor of freedom, the editorial freedom we need as an independent news site.”

I thought about acquiring copies of several of these photographs, print them, and hold an Academic Senate-sponsored event during the Cinco de Mayo week. Present a photo exhibit at the Cuyamaca Art Gallery and connect via zoom with Amapola during the opening of the event for a presentation of the exhibit and their media project. Originally, my idea was to buy the rights to print the copies myself not thinking of fundraising. I invited Marlén and Margena de la O to call-in to our SOC zoom meeting to introduce them to the Senate Officers. There was a tentative agreement to go ahead with the project; however, it would be wiser to locate additional funding and support.

I spoke with Jim Mahler, he said that the Guild could donate \$500. I called a friend who has supported organizations in México and El Salvador in the past, he said he would match AFT’s donation if I would also match for a current total of \$1500.

Marlén proposed a more “transcendental” idea, would it be possible for the College to formally invite Amapola for an educational visit? They could solicit educational visas at the US Embassy to travel to Cuyamaca, help set up and present the exhibit. They would also be available during the day to speak with students and the College. We imagined the dialogue could happen during the Cultural and Community Circle series.

I spoke with Josh Eggleton, Cuyamaca Art Department Chair, and Gini Gómez, gallery and exhibit coordinator. Gini said there is the student exhibit during that week of 5 de Mayo. She suggested using the Sam Ciccati Theatre Lobby. Erin Whitman, Cuyamaca Art instructor, is exhibiting her seascape paintings of the US Border at the lobby. Dr. Pearl López, Grossmont Academic Senate president, asked if the exhibit could also be presented at their new gallery venue. Of course! Josh mentioned the possibility of using current technology available at the College for the printing. That would help considerably in the cost than printed in a commercial vendor.

I invited Marlén and Margena to the AFT meeting to speak via zoom to the general membership. Marlén received a wonderful reception and numerous congratulations in the chat for their work. The meeting voted 134-5 to donate the \$500. Josh Eggleton confirmed his commitment to work on the exhibit during the meeting.

## OUR TRASH THEIR TREASURE

Marlén also expressed that people in the US usually and without remorse throw away working information technology, i.e. desktops, laptops, tablets, etc., equipment that can very easily be put back to work in Guerrero.

Since then, with the collaboration of [AK Tech in Lakeside](#), owned by Cuyamaca student Allen Kachi Noori whose motto is “If You Repair It You Own It” and Profesor Orlando Álvarez from Tecate dealing with the ever present bureaucratic transborder procedures, we have shipped [4 discarded MacBooks](#) to Amapola that [AK Tech](#) made fully functional.

Because of COVID’s pandemic conditions, the US Embassy in México City extended their visa services until 2023. The Amapola Periodismo members who were planning to visit our campus were not able to obtain visas to travel to the United States. The Una Foto por la Libertad project will continue with the

Collective's presentation and conference via zoom. The presentation will be held in the Digital Theatre including videos and transborder dialogues.