



**Patricia  
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Cover: **Gabriela Ochoa Brenneman** with indigenous women in Guatemala (see story page 4).

Courtesy photo

## Women and Poverty

Having just returned from the Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay, it is easy to picture women in poverty. I saw many of them outside the conference location (a posh, three-story church, filled with well-dressed affluent Mennonites) sitting on the street edges selling their wares to those attending the conference. It was difficult to accept my place as one of the affluent. Knowing I had privileges and choices most of these women would never know made me want to avoid their faces and avoid thinking of their situations. Yet, God calls us, like the rich man in Luke 16:19–31, to be attentive to the many poor whom we walk by daily. We cannot meet the systemic needs of each one of them individually, but we can offer hope by moving some from desperation to security for basic needs. For me, it is disheartening to know that a disproportionate number of the poor in the US and throughout the world are women, especially women of color.

An encouragement for me was to be a part of the Women's Theologians gathering and the North American Indigenous Delegation to Paraguay. Both of these experiences introduced me to women in Central and South America as well as in Africa who are working with the poor women in their communities in ways that not only benefit the poor women, but also eventually benefit the entire community economically. Perhaps there is something for us to learn from investing in educating and training women in skills that have economic value, or for valuing the skills that women have and use, but for which no value is assigned.

In this issue of *timbrel*, Gabriela Ochoa Brenneman writes about her experiences as a Guatemalan returning to her country to assist women in an economic development project, while Linda Gehman Peachey writes about the more systemic causes of women and poverty. Vickie Shurelds discusses the biblical response to systemic poverty and privilege. All the articles in this issue show us perspectives on poverty and women that we may never have considered previously. Yet, as women in Mennonite Church USA, we must be exploring why women are so over-represented in the data, and discussing what our response to our sisters must be.

## Sister Question for Sept.–Oct.

In preparation for the next issue of *timbrel*, which will focus on MW USA's new Sister-Care program, consider: **What have you most needed in your connections with other women in the church? In what settings have you meaningfully connected with women in the church?** Send your response to <PattyB@MennoniteWomenUSA.org>. 