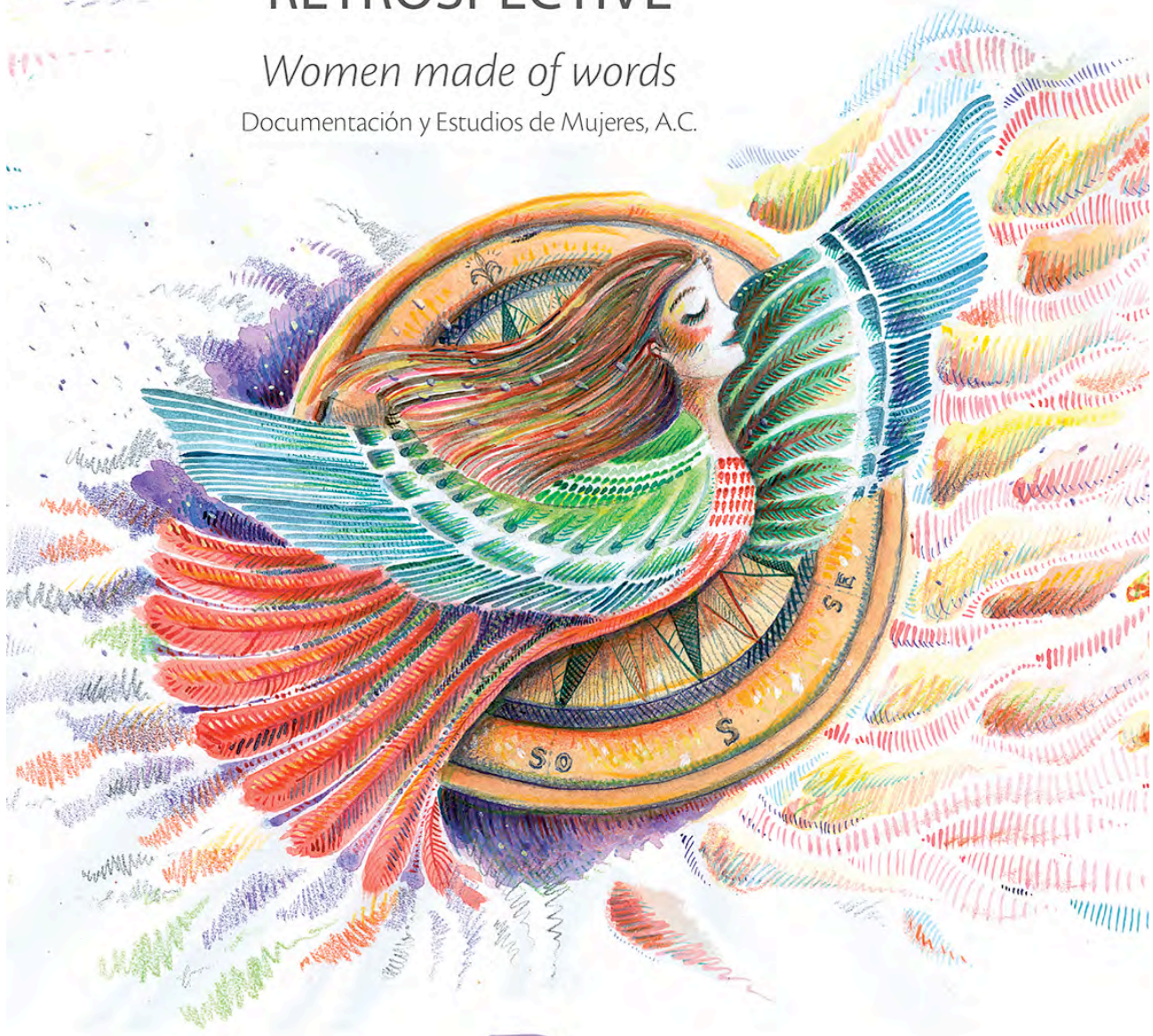


— DEMAC —

# RETROSPECTIVE

*Women made of words*

Documentación y Estudios de Mujeres, A.C.



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# DEMAC

## RETROSPECTIVE

*Women made of words*

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Documentación y Estudios de Mujeres, A.C.  
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# FOREWORD

thirty years promoting women autobiographical writing,  
thirty years publishing autobiographical writings of Mexican women of all ages,  
marital status, professions and social situations,  
thirty years supporting creative projects of women,  
thirty years conducting workshops to write our stories  
—autobiographical, to lose the fear of writing, for older women and virtual workshops,  
twenty years publishing of a seasonal bulletin with a print run of 2,000 copies,  
eighteen years promoting women in seclusion to tell their stories,  
some 10,000 autobiographical texts produced,  
forty-six autobiographical writings published,  
fourteen volumes of prison written texts,  
numerous facilities and plays performed based on autobiographical accounts, launch of books  
written by women in all the States of the Mexican Republic,  
ten national and international competitions For Women Who Dare to Tell their Story® and  
one WEB page open to the world.

The work, the enthusiasm and the economic resources invested have been worth the effort, so we  
are starting a DEMAC new phase aimed at positioning ourselves as a research center which, based  
on the experience acquired during these years, will carry out and disseminate innovative writings on  
the situation of women in Mexico.

Amparo Espinosa Rugarcía  
DEMAC Founder and Director  
October 2015





# INTRODUCTION

The last century saw an increasing involvement of women in all the areas of society. Women developed a social, political and historical consciousness concerning the female gender role and, undoubtedly, they revolutionized invaluable the social and cultural viewpoints everyone used to have about their role. The road has been lengthy for the women and men who helped shorten the gap, because, although major changes were carried out so that future generations of women may enjoy new rights, guarantees and opportunities, their daily life is still marred by an undeniable inheritance of patriarchy.

Two dangers arise from the disturbing imbalance resulting from the gender inequality. First, the tangible problems violating the daily life of women: lack of opportunities, job discrimination, sexual abuse, and a long and painful etcetera. Second, a deeper, intangible, but central danger: the impossibility of self-knowledge and self-definition. In a world still governed by male values and rules, in which the feminine perspectives are marginal and the essence of culture—memory, imagination, identity, moral—is dominated by the scrutiny of man, it is necessary to seek the spaces to find the true female identity. Great women have worked to open those trails for future generations; women who have shattered stereotypes, who have gone against the tide in order to achieve gender equity. But in addition to this crucial fight—which still has to face many rounds—it is essential to undertake another one, perhaps an even more complex because it takes place in the center of each woman: the inner fight.

How can a woman be defined in a world in which she is an alien? Based on which patterns and values? How can she get rid of this burden that she has borne for centuries? How to find the authentic and legitimate values which speak in favor of woman and not man? Over nearly three decades, Documentación y Estudios de Mujeres, A.C. (DEMAC) took charge of opening up spaces in which Mexican women could find their voice and rediscover their identity through an unusual way: autobiographical writing.



Since it was founded in 1989, DEMAC has established itself as a unique and visionary organization whose objectives are to support the efforts of women to find their personal notion of existence in a country dominated by the perspectives of men, to expose the marginalized realities of Mexican women and, in so doing, to start a revolution that will contribute to fight against the gender inequality in Mexico.

## The Written Word

DEMAC deems writing as a fundamental right. The act of writing—of finding our own voice through words—is the way through which we accord meaning to our lives. Words are not only the means with which we depict reality, they are also a tool that helps us capture the sense of our experience in the world; because capturing reality through words opens an inner space unique in us, it allows us to explore our ideas, opinions and feelings. Writing forces us to immerse ourselves in our personality, memory and identity; it opens our eyes to the questioning of what we believed to be true and it opens a door to rethink and recreate our inner world. Writing transforms us.

The written word encourages a deeper exploration of ourselves, because writing requires patience, reflection and close attention. Before venturing to do so, the writer must first articulate her interiority: she must define herself and adopt positions towards herself. Who am I? How I became what I am? What defines me? Where do I come from? Thus, writing is an act of freedom. Pen in hand, women who write unveil to themselves, they get naked for the first time without restrictions before their own conscience, and they discover themselves reconsidering their life. Without words, life is empty; with them, the experience is enriched and it takes on meanings that so far remained hidden.

On this journey, every woman finds the precise and authentic words to express that recently discovered personal universe. They take ownership of writing because their words match their real identity: they are no longer subject to the masculine speech and for the first time they are truly theirs.

*“My journey down this path of writing has brought me a new inner life, recognizing, internalizing myself.”*  
Alicia Catalina Hernández Alarcón, participant at the  
DEMAC Autobiographic Workshop Xalapa.

When writing, the ego's boundaries are breached and the other person's boundaries are touched. Expressing oneself in black and white entails to let oneself go and be willing to let other people reach us. As the written word remains, withstands the test of time and propagates, it makes possible an equally rich, valuable and transforming exercise: that of reading. At the midpoint of this magical encounter between the writer and the reader, DEMAC has multiplied its efforts creating a publishing house dedicated exclusively to this experience. Autobiography is a dynamic and kaleidoscopic genre situated on the subtle line between what is real and fictitious, personal and collective, quotidian and universal, literary and testimonial, descriptive and dramatic, intimate and public. This complexity allows us to understand the human experience in all its different facets and manifestations.

## Writing about Oneself: The Autobiography

Autobiography is not a genre that has enjoyed great popularity in our culture. The interest in it—in any of its forms: diaries, testimonials, autobiographical literature—reflects a preference for the person and his/her particular story; it is an in-depth exploration of who we are and, therefore, of the world we live in. In Mexico, the lack of interest in autobiographies could be explained by the collective and barely individualistic character of our culture. Nonetheless, the abandonment of this genre—and of the introspective practice of writing about oneself—has greater consequences: the lack of interest of the individual in the individual. It is an abandonment of ourselves.

Autobiography is a means to recuperate our individuality. Autobiographic texts are not simply accounts of the events of a lifetime; they make up a framework which stems from the selection of details and events that acquired, in the life of the writer, the power to portray him/her. What is recounted becomes an allegory of the person.

An autobiography summarizes, in a very insightful way, those aspects that make up the individual: his/her behaviors, ideas and intellectual curiosities, ethical and moral attitudes, values and principles, spiritual concerns and supports, emotions and feelings. Moreover, it has an essential characteristic: it is a genre based on change. The autobiographical texts highlight the before and after of their writers; in essence, they reflect the nuclear situations that led the individual to transform his/her inner self, to question what he/she considered a certainty, and to build his/her own identity: to find his/her own truth.

It is not surprising that autobiography is a genre that sparks so much interest in the readers. People who read autobiographies find metaphors, real and living images of themselves. This is mostly true in the case of women. Women who read the autobiographies of other women live through them as a mirror of themselves, as a reflection of their own muted aspirations. They become much more than just texts: they become the dynamic and real epitome of the possibilities of their existence. Their reading gives them a deeper understanding of their own lives, because they can see themselves as the target of their own transformation. Therefore, autobiography is a genre which drives towards a change of reality, which empowers.



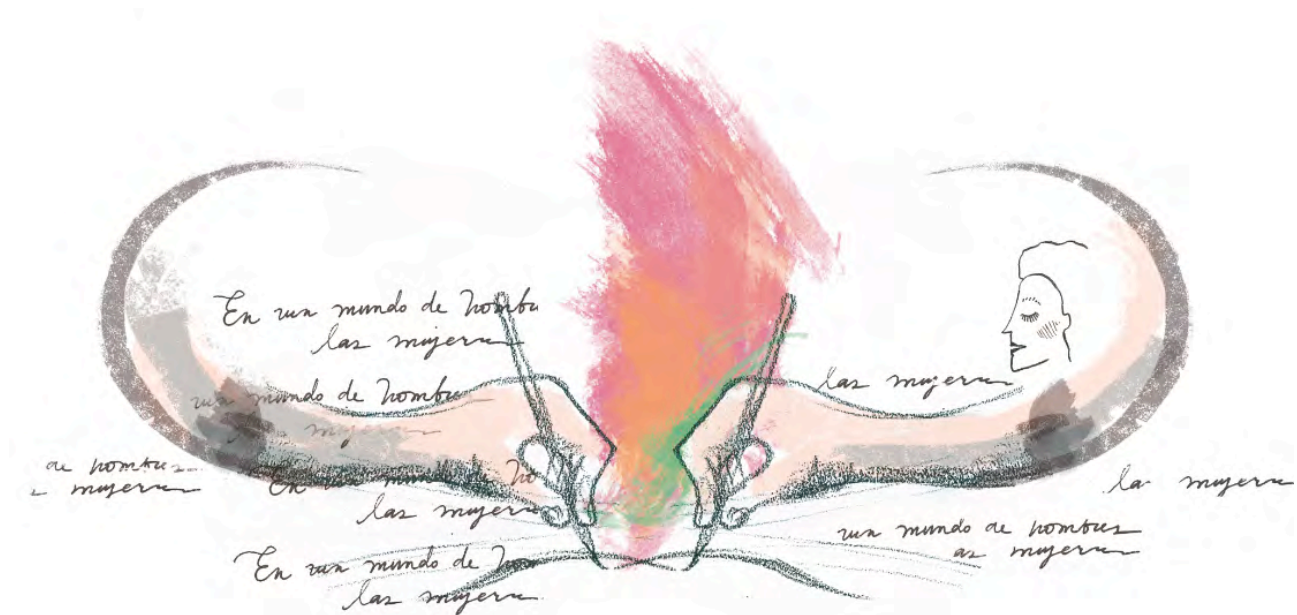


## The Female Autobiography

In our country, the autobiographical writing—writing in general—remains a means of just a few people. It is also a mostly male field. For these reasons, the task of writing entails major challenges for Mexican women. First, they must withstand the pressure of the male world, which traditionally has not opened the door to this kind of channels of expression. Besides, and this is an even greater challenge, they must get rid of the cultural labels imposed to define women. The prevailing ideal of woman is not a product of the female imagination but rather the inheritance of centuries of cultural dominance by the male gender. Perhaps the most important obstacle women have to overcome is to forget these ties deeply rooted in their minds and the way they see themselves. Hence the importance of autobiographical writing as it puts its focus on individuality and not on the way culture has conceived and manipulated the genre as a group.

Autobiographic texts help women recover those experiences allowing them to build their subjectivity. When uncovering what for years had been repressed, autobiography uncovers new ways of conceiving the female gender. These new conceptions are woven by women's own voice and they allow redefine the essential concepts of feminine life: sexuality, motherhood, relationship with men, spirituality and woman's place in society.

Talk about female autobiography does not mean replicate the writing model used by the dominant tradition, but rather reveal the dialogue that women have held with history from their inner selves.









# CHAPTER I

## DEMAC: Yesterday and Today

### Amparo Espinosa: The Vision Behind DEMAC

Amparo Espinosa Rugarcía had the vision to recognize, at a very early age, an undeniable contrast in her environment. In it, women were obedient, discreet and prudent, while men were protagonist and proactive. Time would reveal her that her passion for knowledge and her need to know led into a particular vocation: to work for Mexican women.

Ever since her experience in the Mexican banking system, as head of the Economic Studies Department of Bancomer, Amparo Espinosa discovered that the majority of women knew nothing about the world of finance, so they had no other choice but to leave the handling of their resources in the hands of their husbands, fathers or brothers. To tackle that situation, she implemented a financial education program exclusively for women that could provide them autonomy and self-sufficiency. Keeping true to that same spirit, but convinced of the need to start her own project, in 1990 she founded the non-profit organization Documentación y Estudios de Mujeres, A.C.

## DEMAC Beginnings



Amparo Espinosa Rugarcía

Since its formation, DEMAC has sought to empower the Mexican female population by various means. Its objectives lie in the conviction of its founder that women provide different perspectives of the world that have traditionally been ignored. Thus, in an attempt to rescue and promote woman's thought, DEMAC began gathering a remarkable collection of works by and about women, making available to the public a bibliographic heritage unique in its nature in Mexico. This library contained numerous volumes that brought to light the voices of a muzzled minority.

In its beginning, DEMAC also fostered the creation of development platforms and spaces of expression for women. Through numerous support grants, creative and artistic projects, whose purpose was to delve into the personal and social reality of the Mexican woman, were fostered. One of the first subsidies was awarded to Laura Elena Barrientos, mother of a disabled girl, so that she could write her life experience raising and growing with her daughter. The outcome of this funding was the autobiographical book *Victoria de las Mercedes*. Thanks to these efforts, DEMAC began to establish itself as an institution dedicated to rescue and disseminate the feminine vision in Mexico, as well as to empower its women.



When Amparo Espinoza Rugarcía, founder of DEMAC, conceived this project, she had clearly in her mind the needs of the Mexican women. In the social reality of our country, whatever her social status, the Mexican woman was still at serious disadvantage in relation to man. Such state of affairs demanded solutions with an immediate impact. From that need emerged the idea of designing many varied programs such as financial support for medical emergencies, microcredits to fund the family economy, loans for micro-businesswomen, and even legal advice and psychotherapeutic help. DEMAC started working directly with women immersed in an excluding reality which, by means of gender taboos and anachronistic social laws, was affecting their development. Along with these programs, seminars, workshops and book presentations were also organized in order to promote the questioning of traditions and conventions and thus foster the exploration of the female identity. Bit by bit, DEMAC began to shake consciences to contribute to gender equality and to break deeply rooted sexist standards.

<p>DEMAC's heritage contained more than 2,000 titles sorted as follows:</p> <p>44.87% feminine literature, 10.25% biographies, 9.96% philosophy, 5.24% feminism, 3.58% woman's psychology, and 5.33% woman's socioeconomic conditions</p>	<p>DEMAC created the AMEYHALE Fund and the GINCEO Fund with the purpose of improving the living conditions of women from marginalized areas through economic support for their daily life needs and for their income-generating projects, as well as to raise their awareness of those feminine values and leadership that would help them to transcend.</p>
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## Autobiography: DEMAC's Vocation

One of the first documents defining DEMAC's philosophy says: "DEMAC deems necessary to build a bridge between the personal and the social." This concern existed since its inception: to look after the subjective reality of women, and, above all, to deal with it face to face involving them directly. But DEMAC's first experiences when working with women—women who were going through a living critical stage or transition—soon revealed the urgent need to create an expression setting exclusively for them. Women who approached DEMAC wanted, above all, to be heard. A place like DEMAC—led by women to help other women—became a safe haven where Mexican women could freely and openly express their concerns and ideas, where they could communicate their life experiences to other women, where their viewpoints on life were received with respect and without any prejudice: a space where they were duly valued.

*"When I received the books I felt that I still have a chance to be a complete woman and that in that small published paragraph is the evidence that what I feel and think interests someone, that I don't have to be a luminary of the academic world to be heard. I insist: I thought that such an effort had been lost in time, but seeing that it has not been so touches me to such a degree that my whole being hurts and invites me to cling to life with a greater conscience to be lived."*

Susana Gil Montelongo, 1999-2000 DEMAC Awards participant

The individual stories of these women threw light on a broader reality: the Mexican and Latin American society. Thus, it became evident that the retrieval, publication and dissemination of these experiences and testimonies would incite to reflect on the Mexican female reality and that through the dissemination of these life chronicles confined for years DEMAC would help to change the

gender paradigms. That's how the vocation which the organization obeys so far starts to get more clearly defined: to promote the integral development of Mexican women through stimulating their creative capacity, especially through the autobiographical writing.

## Writing as a Therapy

DEMAC believes that every person has the power and the ability to write. The literary style, the grammatical correctness or the creative innovation take second place when we discover the vital reward associated with the act of writing: its power to accurately transform the writer. Writing allows us to discover our most unconscious emotions and thoughts. We bring to light what was hidden and now, in the open, we can begin a self-analysis process. Women who put in writing their lives go through a cathartic moment when they put their emotions and thoughts on paper: writing is a liberating process.

*"My relations with my family changed as a result of having written my story. My husband, my daughters and my sons discovered another ingredient to season their love for me: admiration."*

Ana Emilia Villa Issa, winner of the 1997-1998 DEMAC Award of the autobiography genre

When reading what has been captured on paper, a woman is able to interpret and analyze—from a more objective perspective—what has been written. It is possible to observe thoroughly her main intimacies: her dreams, fears, prejudices, desires, secrets. When writing, emotions are reasoned and we learn to accurately express our most complex feelings. What was in our unconscious until that moment comes out to the conscious, thus making possible to heal and change our behavior patterns, as we discover the origin and the causes of whatever was hampering our development. The negative gets transformed into positive.

*"To narrate is to fall inside our conscience: it is from her memory that the person rethinks her life, integrates it, weaves it and inserts it in the reality. It has already been said that writing is an act of freedom. And we understand freedom as the highest symbol of consciousness, where the commitment is immanent to the woman who feels, thinks, undresses and creates her personal cosmos."*

Ana Isabel Mateos, workshop coordinator at DEMAC Queretaro

Writing an autobiography is to remember. The experience of being in front of a blank page leads us to explore the past, to reflect on the present and to inquire into the possibilities of the future. When we write about the different stages of our life, we look for their coherence, because we make connections between key episodes and we see them in a new light. We take ownership of our experiences and we recognize them as ours. Writing allows us to fill in the blanks, to discover the meaning of senseless stages, to explore difficult periods and to set the course of our future life.

*"Writing her history gives rise to deep reflections that lead the author to make changes in her life, such as study a career, look for a job, keep writing, understand more her children*

*or parents, value herself."*

Amaranta Medina, coordinator of the DEMAC Workshop  
To lose the fear of writing®

Psychology has widely recognized both the psychological and the physical benefits of writing about oneself. Thanks to the meaningful lessons stemming from the exploration of their own lives, women who write reinforce their self-esteem, reduce their stress and change the patterns that prevent their integral development.

*“DEMAC is a meeting place, the perfect excuse for women of different ages, different backgrounds and different beliefs to share their everyday life, the experiences they have snatched from life, their misfortunes and their successes, because despite the heterogeneity of the participants, we all speak one unique language: being a woman.”*

Isabel Migueles Garduño, DEMAC Puebla workshop participant











## CHAPTER II

### How DEMAC Operates

#### The Competitions

In 1993, after recognizing the need and the desire expressed by Mexican women of make known their life stories, DEMAC convened the first biographical and autobiographical writing competition: DEMAC Awards *For women who dare to tell their story*®. With this competition, DEMAC sought to rescue stories of women neglected by the official history, and to recognize those women who had had extraordinary lives but who never had the space to express themselves.

At this competition, biographies of Mexican women as well as autobiographical texts—life testimonies, diaries, letters—were received. The competition generated an amazing response: more than 200 texts were received from different states of the country, written by women of all social strata and ages.

The texts received and, of course, those who were the winners, showed that DEMAC's mission responded to a silenced need of the female population. The participants completely devoted themselves to the task of writing their lives. In their writings they candidly reflected the resilience with which they faced difficult situations and the vitality that they kept after overcoming great obstacles. The texts became a unique window to learn more about the private life of Mexican women, a window that had never been opened before and now revealed great discoveries: the emergence of new female models for Mexican women. The testimony of these anonymous women—some of which had never took some time to write or even to reflect on their own life—gave an account of an ignored reality which had eventually found a space to break free and to be disseminated: an outlet. Through the promotion of these competitions, DEMAC rescued life experiences which, due to their intensity and authenticity, acquired the power to become new representative examples and feminine parameters for women in Mexico. These biographies and autobiographies of women—some unknown but extraordinary, and others famous but forgotten—began to shape the mirror through which the new generations of Mexican women could look at themselves, reflect themselves and imagine themselves: A genuinely feminine mirror which was born from the true word of each of the authors and the internal journey undertaken towards their own center.

*“Creating the portrait of a person who has appealed to me did change my way of seeing the immediate reality. Each person that one sees every day constitutes a whole world, a microcosm which you can learn from. So many lives, so many voices should have to be rescued so that they could tell us so many things and change not only the life of the person who writes but also that of the person who is going to read that text.”*

Martha Díaz de Kuri, winner at the 1997-1998 DEMAC Awards  
- Autobiography genre

Very soon, the competitions became DEMAC's central theme of action. This fact led to new ideas to reward those women who would tell their story with mettle and originality. Thus were born special competitions, specific topics, and the Penitentiary DEMAC Award. All of these required an effort to promote and encourage autobiography and biography as means for knowing oneself, as well as for strengthening the identity of the Mexican female population.



In each of its editions, the results of the competitions were ruled by a select and expert jury, but above all sensitive to the organization's philosophy. Among the judges were personalities such as Margo Glantz, Ethel Krauze, Barbara Jacobs, Beatriz Espejo, Rosario Izquierdo, Bertha de la Maza and Felipe Garrido.

*"DEMAC Awards winner, Teresa Ramos Moxo—an illiterate, nahuatl-speaking and deficient Spanish-speaking autochthon—obtained the first place in the competition thanks to the honesty with which she recounted her story. According to her, she never imagined that she could accomplish something so important."*

Gisela Pérez y Pérez, DEMAC Puebla workshop coordinator

The DEMAC Awards' experience differs from the creative writing or the research competitions. DEMAC rewards those texts that stand out, not by their aesthetic ambition and literary correctness, but by the authentic content of the stories recounted. True to its philosophy, DEMAC seeks that these testimonies of life become positive inspirations for other women and be able to stimulate reflection and promote the breaking of traditional schemes.

*"The book has been a great help to save those who were convinced that nothing could be done concerning their disability. When they heard the story on the radio, or they got the book, their life changed."*

María Antonieta Osornio Ramírez, mention at the 1995-1996 DEMAC Awards and winner at the 2003-2004 DEMAC Awards - Autobiography genre.

## DEMAC Awards: a window to the Mexican female reality

Traditionally, the intimate and private life was not considered significant in the study of the historical phenomena. However, it is precisely these aspects of social life that allow us to fully understand the collective conscience of a specific historical period. Delving into a diary or an epistolary

exchange lets us know, firsthand, the mentality and the ways of living of their authors.

Reading them lets us get a portrait of the prevailing ideas in each social group.

The dissemination of the autobiographical and biographical texts entails, in the long run, a profound exploration and a greater understanding of the persons who create our history. When we approach certain individuals and we manage to know the most intimate part of their lives, the context in which they live acquires new meanings, since we interpret it through the eyes of a flesh and blood person with whom we can identify.

How have the social movements affected the Mexican women? How has the female population reacted to the economic crisis or the feminist movements? How have changed the ways of conceiving the female gender along the centuries? These questions can only be answered by the mouth of women who have dared to reveal their lives on paper.

How can history be understood without understanding the people who lived it, silently but deeply? Reading the stories that DEMAC has collected so far is like peeking into Mexico's history with a new lens. The competitions held by DEMAC have revealed intimate aspects which, without this

space, women would have not been able to express. That is why DEMAC's undertaking is crucial and constitutes a means of expression that unveils great discoveries concerning the woman population of our country. Ignored for years by the official history, the biographies and autobiographies of women retrieve the significance of their personal lives. These texts shed light about our times, past and present, and enable us to rethink our future. They are proofs which in the long run will constitute a unrivaled heritage for understanding the evolution of the feminine thinking in Mexico.

The response to DEMAC competitions has revealed Mexican women's latent need to speak up. Many of them disclosed their desire to belong to a group where their opinion and viewpoint about life is valued and respected. DEMAC has been such a space for them.

*"A not pondered life is not worth to be lived... In a pragmatic sense, it is worth living and reflecting on what was experienced, so as to better live what's coming new."*

Graciela Hierro Perezcastro, winner at the 1999-2000 DEMAC Awards  
- Autobiography genre

Statistics and data concerning the female sector are substantial but not enough to disclose what is happening in the bosom of the female population in Mexico. Over almost three decades, the texts received and awarded by DEMAC have revealed interesting aspects about this group. Through these stories of great strength, statistics come to life.

*Until 2014, 4,923 women had participated in the competitions called by DEMAC.*

The competitions have revealed which are the issues that most affect the majority of women. Some of the most recurrent are: the family, domestic violence, infidelity, divorce, migration, and alcoholism. Just based on this short list it is possible to derive an overview of the situations that women undergo in our country, many of them reflecting the traditional male values. But perhaps what these texts depict more widely is the domestic dynamics. In it, the woman is still the person in charge of the household tasks, thus revealing a notorious inequity in the general distribution of these obligations. The family, conceived as the core of many of these texts, brings to light a generation of women who, despite the difficulties and thanks to their tireless work, keep going with integrity. The texts unveil another interesting aspect: the growing presence of women in the work setting. Although this is an important achievement in matters of gender equality in our country, the testimonies of these women reveal that there is still a lot to be done. Thousands of Mexican women spend their days between strenuous domestic tasks and long professional workdays, while at the same time they train and educate their children, sometimes without support from their partners. This affects their opportunities of finding a job, because the labor market continues privileging men, even though in many cases their professional training is the same. This inequality is experienced even within the couple through different acts of violence. Violence, in many of its forms—blows, psychological manipulation, abandonment, adultery—drives women to increasingly seek the divorce or the separation. If marriage was formerly an immutable institution that had to be honored unconditionally, now women watch over their own interests and those of their family, defying tradition.

*"In no way I wanted to be like those women who stood out as role models and endured beyond stoicism their husband's violent behavior. That's why I preferred to be all alone once again regardless of the fifty pesos that I woke up with." [...] The breakup was preferable to continue enduring the covert violence!"*

Martha Gutiérrez, mention at the 2005-2006 DEMAC Awards



The most diverse consequences of gender inequality get expressed in these texts. And although the authors come from the most diverse contexts, when we read them we get an overview of the problems they experience and the circumstances women face as a genre. But perhaps the most valuable thing we find in these stories is the fact that, regardless of the obstacles and barriers, those women find the way to move forward, develop and help their families. Sometimes this requires to make radical decisions—as to emigrate or to divorce—but at the end they pursue, with perseverance and patience, the dreams and opportunities that make them grow.

The increasing participation in these competitions highlights the population urgency of putting women on the map; of looking for new female protagonists of our history; of finding new female role models for the next generations of Mexicans. As a result of these stories, names of women who from their homes, workplaces and even from prison challenge their environment, overcome obstacles, and outdo themselves to assert themselves in front of a world ruled by men, have appeared.



## The Publishing House

Since the first competition that was convoked, for Amparo Espinosa it became clear that these extraordinary stories had to be read; that these unveiled secrets could not remain confined in the hands of just a few: it was imperative to start its dissemination among the general public. At first, DEMAC offered some commercial publishers to jointly publish the winning texts, but they rejected the proposal. In view of their refusal, DEMAC did not gave up. With the conviction that these stories were valuable at different levels and that they could enrich and impact the lives of those who could have them in their hands, DEMAC decided to found its own publishing house.

The idea of creating this publishing house stemmed from the power of the stories. Their dissemination signified the disclosure of new ways of defining oneself, new paradigms and role models to follow. It also signified the promotion of a necessary reflective exercise on the reality that women live in our country. It signified to open the eyes of women to a scenario that held great promises.





Since the beginning of DEMAC as a documentation center, one of its central tasks was to collect works written by and about women in a bibliographic collection open to the public. Once rediscovered the true vocation of the organization—writing—it became obvious that the texts which mostly required protection and dissemination were the biographical and autobiographical texts, because, in addition to being scarce they are barely read. So in 2013, leaving behind that stage of its activities and to be able to concentrate its efforts on the creation of a collection of autobiographical texts, DEMAC donated all of its bibliographic heritage to the Gender Humanistic Studies Workshop, Faculty of Arts of the University of Tlaxcala, so that its community could make the most of it.

DEMAC focused its attention in those common and anonymous women who had never taken a pen. The publishing house gave a voice to this diversity of great women who, in many cases, not only had never written but neither had turned their eyes towards their own interior. With the publication of their texts, these apparently ordinary women discovered themselves as extraordinary women, women who divulged a new social outlook by daring to be an open book.



Indeed, DEMAC's publishing house nature is unique. Although its collection of publications mainly come from the competitions, it also includes other academic and literary works in line with the philosophy and objectives of the organization. These works are aimed at disseminate the critical analysis and the theoretical thinking of women and men at the forefront of gender studies. Currently, DEMAC's publishing house catalog has 156 titles, published from 1989 to 2014. These range from anthologies of autobiographical texts, stories winning contests, poetry books, writing manuals, studies of psychology and psychoanalysis, and biographies of women. These range from anthologies of autobiographical texts, stories winners of competitions, poetry books, writing manuals, psychology and psychoanalysis studies, and biographies of women.

## Collections

### Autobiography

It comprises the texts winners and worthy of honorable mentions of the DEMAC Awards in this genre. At the end of 2015 there were 119 titles.

### Biography

It comprises the texts winners and worthy of honorable mentions of the DEMAC Awards in this genre. Its aim is to make the Mexican society aware of the reality of its women. So far it has 37 biographies.

### Women in Confinement

It comprises the texts participating in the competition DEMAC Penitentiary Award. So far, 14 titles have been published and it gathers 290 autobiographical texts written by confined women.

### Guides and Manuals

The dominant theme of this collection is to encourage women to get started in the field of autobiographical writing and also that they dare to tell their story.

### Other Genres

With the aim of promoting and disseminating the critical analysis and reflective thought about women, this collection gathers 80 titles concerning topics such as psychoanalysis, feminism, gender theory, as well as poetry, essays and anthologies of autobiographies and biographies.

The books published by DEMAC can be found in the major bookstores of the country and enjoy great success among the female audience. This can be explained because the experience of reading an author considered a peer, with whom we can easily identify ourselves, who we can see as a mirror of ourselves, results in a remarkable personal enrichment.

*“When the act of writing is completed and published, it acquires another dimension: the author grows up and at the same time she allows other people benefit from her work; she makes some of us see our own circumstances in her story; we feel accompanied; we see how she faced this or that situation; it can open up new paths, new possibilities for us.”*

Olga Beatriz Cuéllar Gaxiola, workshop coordinator and representative  
- DEMAC Xalapa.

The success of DEMAC titles has led its publishing house group to be present at the major book fairs in the country where the public interest in the autobiographic genre has been evident.

DEMAC has been present in more than a hundred book fairs in Mexico and abroad.

In addition to the sale of books, DEMAC promotes writing through workshops for women whose response is overwhelming. The book fairs have been real launch pads for the expansion of this project that has changed the lives of many women.





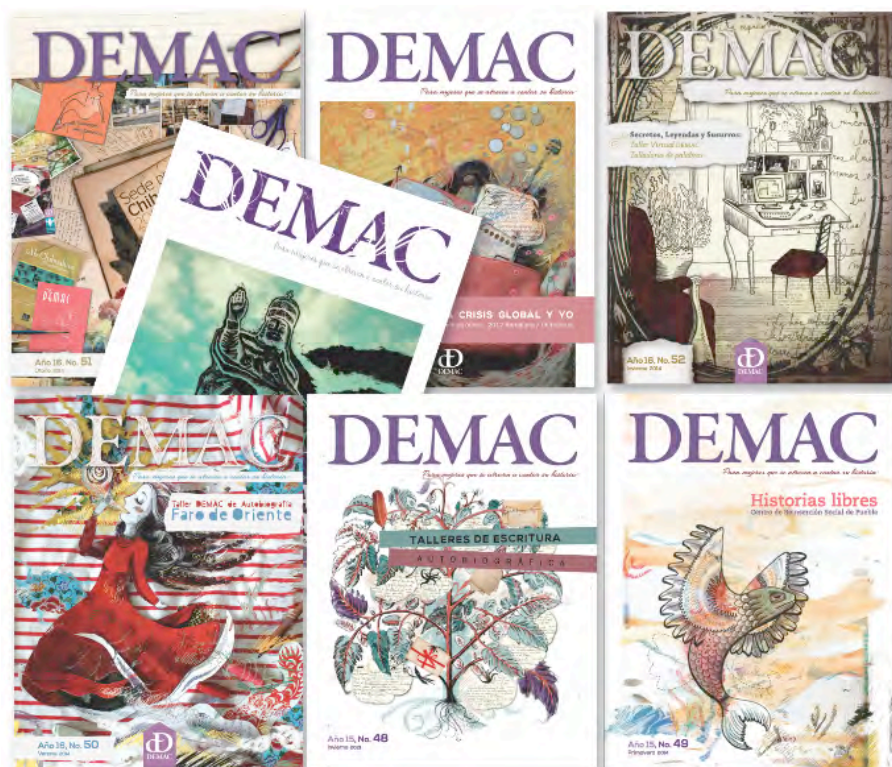
## The Newsletter

While the publishing house group covered the promotional aspects required by the texts, DEMAC's tasks and activities were so varied and numerous that they demanded their own diffusion channel. Therefore, in 1999 the first DEMAC Newsletter was published to communicate both the essence of the organization and the heap of activities carried out to promote the empowerment of women. The visual proposal of the Newsletter was designed by visual artists Gonzalo Tassier and Mariana Zúñiga who, with their imagination and talented pen, have given shape to the topics included in the publication. Their artistic job has instilled the Newsletter with a distinctive personality which emphasizes the texts it includes.

*In 2009, Gonzalo Tassier won the Design Award for his great work for the 34th Edition of the DEMAC Newsletter.*

The Newsletters—published seasonally, four times a year—focus on specific themes. Their contents includes essays, testimonies of activities, excerpts from winning texts and research on women's studies. With a print run of 2,000 copies, they are forwarded nationally and internationally to more than 1,500 persons in 31 States of the Republic and 35 international locations.

To date, they have become a means which links DEMAC with the female community it seeks to serve, as well as a tool that disseminates information about the identity of the Mexican woman. So far, 56 issues have been published, covering the most diverse topics: gender violence, testimonies of sexual abuse, Mexican female chefs, abortion, love, sexuality, religion, among many others. The Newsletter has served as a means to promote DEMAC's presence in different communication forums, to disseminate the book presentations and the award ceremonies. It has also been an essential vehicle to reveal the social impact it has had on those who have participated in the project, as well as to keep stakeholders informed on the organization activities.



## The Workshops

The enriching experience of the first calls revealed the transforming and constructive power of writing an autobiography, making it clear that it is a tool for self-knowledge and empowerment. That is why that, in order to make more women are participants and protagonists in the world of writing, DEMAC teaches various workshops that promote the self-examination. Although the contests have been a primary means to promote the appropriation of writing, the workshops have the power to reach more groups of women who still have reservations, prejudices and fears regarding the writing activity. Some fear to reveal secrets to third persons, others restrain themselves due to their poor handwriting or spelling, and many others are simply deeply intimidated by the white sheet of paper. Thus, workshops are a basic push to break into writing and begin to develop a voice of their own.

*7,627 women have discovered  
their ability to express themselves  
in writing in 871 workshops.*



The workshops allow DEMAC to reach women of the most vulnerable and marginalized sectors of society, who are the ones who receive the greatest benefits and perks when they take a pen for the first time. DEMAC has given workshops to women victims of gender violence, former sex workers, visually deficient, police women, senior indigenous women, among others. Without knowing it, these brave women are writing a new stage of History: they are leaving a written testimony—permanent and immutable—of the female reality in the course of Mexico's history.

## DEMAC Workshop For women who dare to tell their story®

As a result of the numerous competitions convened, many women showed interest in joining the DEMAC community and to write about their lives. This interest was taken care of by the work-team who created the DEMAC *Workshop For women who dare to tell their story*® in 2003.

This workshop quickly became one of the pillars of DEMAC's Mission, because it drew a large number of women who soon formed a united community. With a length of six months, the workshop is a space where women can sketch and improve their autobiographical texts. During that period of time, these women—who share their most intimate secrets and talk openly about their inner selves in front of the others—establish special ties that result in friendships. In a society that does not value what women have to say, the workshop is an oasis where Mexican women can express themselves freely and where they are listened to with respect.

*“At the beginning, the participants expressed how hard it was for them to write, especially because they had done so to tell their life. They felt sorry and ashamed for punctuating with errors for writing with misspellings or for not knowing how to use a computer. Gradually, those feelings disappeared and gave way to confidence. The group got quickly integrated; soon they felt twinned when they shared their texts, when they became aware that their voice was gaining importance.”*

Maria Teresa Pérez Cruz, workshop coordinator at Faro de Oriente.

The workshop experience has confirmed that autobiography is a diverse genre. Life itself can be addressed in many ways and from different perspectives. Unlike other genres, it lacks fixed conventions or demands about the way to write about oneself. It is flexible and open to the expressive, imaginative and creative freedom. For this reason, the workshops are based on the idea of automatic writing, i.e. the persons write without rational filters, spontaneously. Once they have gotten rid of whatever afflicted them, the workshop coordinator accompanies the women in the process of writing.

*“During the writing process, I was able to rewrite some of my experiences because when I was formulating them I noticed that on the one hand was experience, and on the other the way in which I had lived it. Sometimes I had doubts on what I was writing and I even asked myself: ‘That really happened? Is what I wrote the truth?’ Those questions helped me collect my ideas.”*

Silvia Ayala, participant in a DEMAC Workshop  
*For women who dare to tell their story*® - Mexico City

*229 Autobiography workshops have been given, benefiting 2,177 women in total.*

The workshop coordinators' role is not to teach or instruct. They are only a guide and a source of motivation for participants. They help them unveil aspects of their life deserving to be related and to inquire about anecdotes having a representative, communicative and expressive potential. And although they advise women on how to write their testimonies, they are always respectful of the personal rhythm and style of each author.

## DEMAC Workshop To lose the fear of writing®



The DEMAC Workshop *To lose the fear of writing*® (TLFW) was designed based on a concern: What happens to women who do not have access to the information on the competitions and are not able, for different reasons, to attend an autobiography workshop? With this idea in mind was created the TLFW Workshop, devised to reach isolated communities and aimed at those women who could not travel great distances. This workshop started being given in 2010 as a project to help women get rid of their fears about the exercise of writing. It is a one single session intensive workshop that lasts four hours. Led by an experienced workshop coordinator, the participants rediscover the act of writing and acquire confidence in themselves.

The workshop is not intended to teach the participants. Nor it looks for a grammatical or spelling flawlessness or a literary and stylistic originality. The workshop seeks that these women find the way to express their interior through words. To do this, they must first get rid of their social fears, their psychological limitations and shame. This experience gives rise to important moments going from catharsis, mental block and reflection up to frustration, resulting in clarity, acceptance and empowerment.

*“Accept and honor the experience of everyone as something important, as well as feel heard without being criticized, allows attendees to enter into this dynamic of acceptance and respect which helps them get rid of another series of burdens: the ideal image, the shame, the shyness, the insecurity, the weight of ‘what people might say’.”*

Leonor Vargas Gil Lamadrid, workshop coordinator at DEMAC Puebla.

For four hours, women start out in the world of writing; for many of them it is their first contact with it. Through exercises, dynamics and eliciting questions, they discover both the need and the taste for writing. They do it both individually and next to their companions, and they don't mind if they do it right or wrong: they just get carried away by the rhythm of their own speech. Memories, emotions and ideas sprout with the guide of the workshop leader who helps them in bringing order and clarity to their mind, encouraging them to find ways to express themselves with freedom and authenticity.

*To give this important workshop, DEMAC developed the handbook *To lose the fear of writing*, written by Amaranta Medina and published by DEMAC.*

*This handbook is the basis of the workshops given in several locations of the country.*

Women put on paper their reflections regarding the relationship they have had so far with writing, their personal relationships, their family and their vision of the world. In the end, they discover that writing is easier than they thought, since once they start their search they also start to take ownership of their word.



### DEMAC Workshop For senior women who dare to tell their story

The experience of the autobiography and the TLFW workshops revealed the existence of a special sector of the female population with specific needs: that of senior women. These women possess a wisdom of life that can lead to lessons and valuable experiences for young people. However, their group is generally forgotten and in many cases they don't find ears willing to listen to their stories, not even in their own families. For this reason, DEMAC developed a workshop conceived exclusively for them, to rescue their life stories.

The workshop—with a length of six months—encourages its participants to write about their experiences and opinions. Through the exercise of writing, these women extend the reach of their communication with stimulating and revitalizing results, because they are going through a life stage in which they are usually neglected by their close relatives or, due to various reasons, they are not able to find the motivation to undertake new projects. The women who make up these groups find company and solidarity between themselves, as well as the opportunity to enrich their own life experience by knowing the experiences of their peers. By appropriating their voice, these women find a means to regain the security in themselves and thus raise their levels of emotional well-being. The texts produced—real jewels of great cultural and social value—are a rescue of life stories and lessons whose value transcends the intimate sphere, as they are testimonies of our history seen through the eyes of women.













## CHAPTER III

### Where Does DEMAC Operate

#### DEMAC at the CERESOs (Social Reinsertion Centers)

When DEMAC discovered the abandonment faced by women in confinement, it decided to join forces with the Public Security Secretariat and create a project aimed at improving the life quality of the inmates, providing them a space that works as a safety valve, a real space for freedom within the confinement.

DEMAC introduced a competition so that women in confinement could write their testimonies of life. Disseminated every two years, the call attracted women from prisons throughout Mexico. As a result, 295 stories have been published in fourteen volumes. The success obtained and the confirmation that writing about one's life brings about major changes led to the creation of a workshop aimed specifically at these women. The first DEMAC *Workshop For women in confinement who dare to tell their story*—given at the San Miguel Women's Cereso—happened at the initiative of the DEMAC Puebla branch in 2003.

*“Women in prison taught me much more than what I could have taught them... I learned that writing the autobiography can heal the strongest pain, since the written story leads us to the center: that mysterious place where we connect with our own metaphors, mirrors of our origin and destiny.”*

Beatriz Meyer, workshop leader at the San Miguel Women's Cereso in Puebla

In a context where psychological counselling is scarce and emotional conflicts are deeply complex, the workshops given by DEMAC inside the facilities of the prisons quickly become a self-knowledge tool for the inmates. Through writing, many women are able to glimpse the causes that led them to be confined; they assume their responsibilities or grant forgiveness to those who impelled them to extreme situations.

For these women, reading and writing open a window to freedom. When they analyze and express themselves in black and white, and when they listen to the experiences of their peers, the participants discover an inner world in which freedom of thought leads them to grow as individuals. Writing brings about a world where they can go on living, because they understand that despite

living confined, their minds and their imagination are not chained. Thus, they find out the root of their vital decisions, they discover the origin of certain traits of their personality or they face emotions that they could not assimilate. After this cathartic process triggered by the words, those women begin a transformation process and, sometimes for the first time, they peep at the possibility of change, hope and a bright future outside the gates: they start dreaming once again.

The workshops given by DEMAC also offer these women the opportunity to provide continuity to a project in a disciplined manner. For them, attending regularly the workshops implies lending some structure to their usually chaotic and complicated lives. Very soon, the workshop becomes an essential regular activity that participants eagerly await week after week. Their development and progress become clear session after session. They are aware that their work and dedication will yield a text that will pull them out of anonymity and invisibility and will allow them to tell their awkward story to other Mexican women. For being a space of freedom and hope, writing facilitates the process of social reintegration of the inmates because, through the pen and the exploration of their life experiences, they envision the possibility of healing their past.

On the other hand, the DEMAC Workshop *For women in confinement who dare to tell their story* is a space that fosters the denunciation and the complaint, the relief and the catharsis. The testimonies reveal a reality that receives little attention in our country: the feminine experiences behind bars.

Whoever reads them peeps into one of the most vulnerable sectors of Mexico, where gender inequality reaches its last consequences. It is well known, for instance, that a large number of women confess that the reasons that led them to be behind bars have to do with their love or family relationships. We read about young women that assume the blame for a murder committed by another person, or about wives who, to avoid abandonment, help their partners commit drug dealing offenses. On the other hand, it is also possible to have a glimpse at the impact their detention has on society, on those who have remained out of jail. Many of them suffer their family abandonment: their visits become less frequent and their children rebuild their lives without them. In many cases, when a mother is in jail, her family falls apart, the children go away and the household disintegrates. This is one of the major themes of the stories: the grief of separation and the yearning to meet again. The impact on everyday life makes evident that the foundations of the Mexican family still rest largely on the mother figure.

*DEMAC Workshops have been given in Chiapas, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Hidalgo, Nayarit, Puebla, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi and Zacatecas detention centers.*

The painful writings produced for the competitions not only reflect a society that rough women up, but also a flimsy justice system and a brutal correctional system. Here lies the importance of disseminating these autobiographical texts: their reading and promotion can help women learn from the life experiences of other women, and society in general to be aware of the consequences of living immersed in unfairness.

*“The autobiography workshop given at the Cereso allows us to live with hope, because we can make a stop on the road and get to know us a little better. And, despite the physical seclusion, this reveals us our freedom of thought and our approach to spirituality.”*

*María Margarita Hernández Zapata, former inmate at the San Miguel Women’s Cereso.*



## Branches and Representations

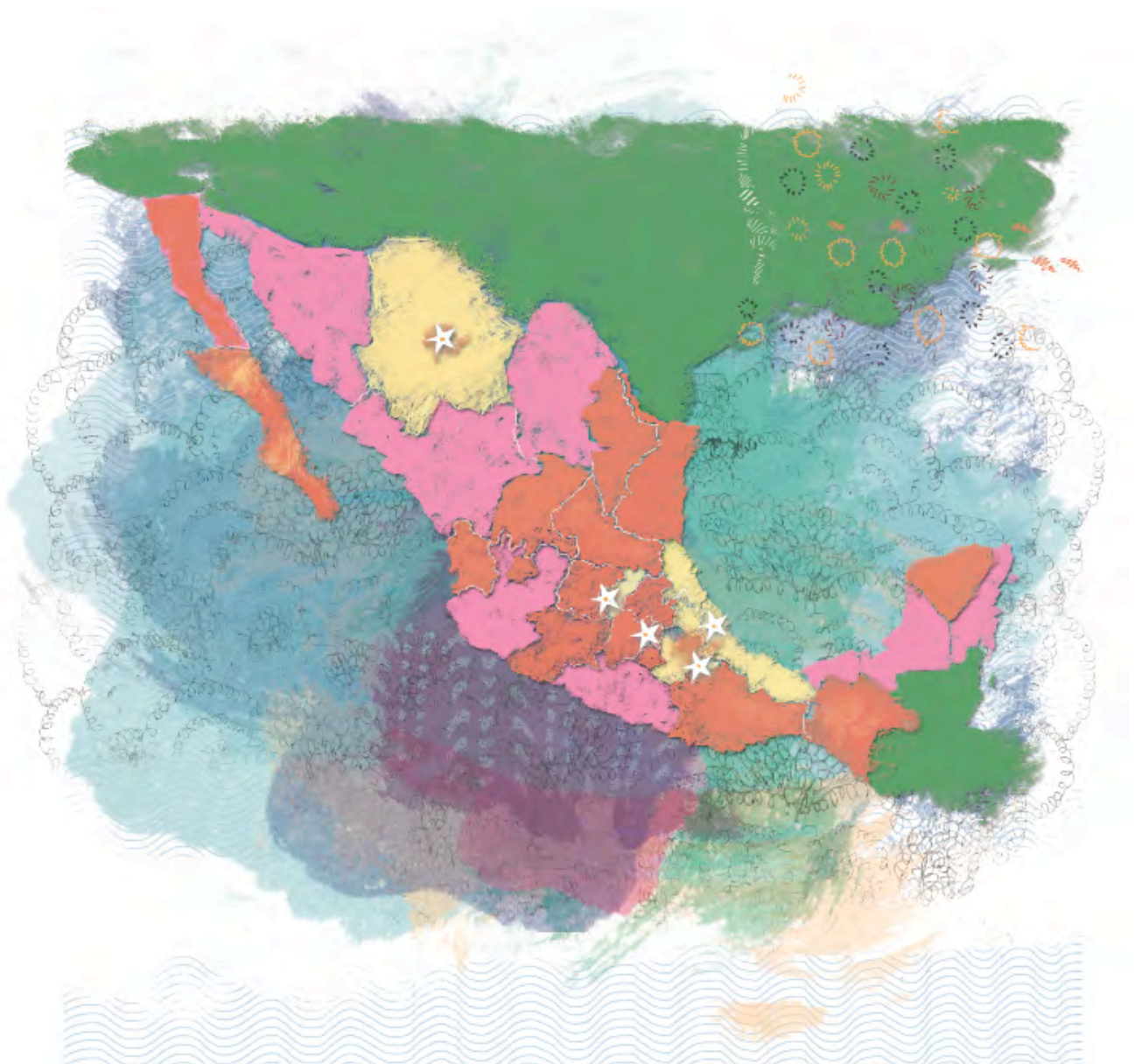
DEMAC has enlarged its area of influence across the country. In addition to its Mexico City head office, currently it operates in three States of the Republic—Chihuahua, Puebla, Querétaro—and in one city, Xalapa, capital of the State of Veracruz. The branches and representations are the outcome of the interest stirred by the competitions, in some cases founded by former participants who decided to carry DEMAC's Mission to their place of origin. All are integrated by a committed team that, in constant communication with DEMAC's management, carries its mission to the most remote places of Mexico.

The branches have become an essential instrument to promote DEMAC activities and make them available to the largest possible number of Mexican women. They are responsible for disseminating the calls on a local and regional level, for giving the workshops on a permanent basis in keeping with DEMAC guidelines, for promoting the latest publications through book presentations and distributing the titles in bookstores of different municipalities. Through the contact with authorities, cultural institutions and human development centers, the branches have made DEMAC grow, positioning it at national level. Gradually, their hard work and their commitment to the objectives of the association have succeeded in boosting the interest and participation of the female audience.

### The Branches:

- Give DEMAC Workshop For women who dare to tell their story® and DEMAC Workshop To lose the fear of writing®.
- They provide support to the DEMAC Women Meeting Circles, autonomous writing groups that get integrated at the end of a DEMAC Workshop For women who dare to tell their story®.
- They organize book presentations.
- They establish and maintain relations with public and private akin institutions to disseminate DEMAC Mission and activities.
- They give packages of books published by DEMAC Publishing House to libraries.
- They create DEMAC libraries, with a take-home loan service.
- They maintain a strong presence in the local media to promote their activities.

In addition to these tasks, each branch carries out an intense activity in its region. And although they always adhere to the guidelines set out by management, each branch identifies the specific needs of its community and implements action plans to address them. Thus, the branches have been real niches for communities of women eager to belong to a group unified by the same concerns. Throughout its trajectory, DEMAC has also had representations in San Luis Potosí and Ciudad Juárez. Requests are constantly received to represent DEMAC in many States of the country. Workshops have been given in Baja California, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Puebla, Queretaro, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, Yucatán and Zacatecas.



DEMAC Branches

DEMAC Workshops

## DEMAC and Other Institutions: Joining Forces

*Between 2004 and 2014 DEMAC formed alliances with 471 institutions to reach its objectives.*

To implement real changes in society, it is crucial to work together and to combine efforts. That is why, throughout its trajectory, DEMAC has approached several institutions with the purpose of disseminating its mission and get that its projects benefit the greatest possible number of Mexican women. As a result of this joint effort it has been possible to build a network of citizens, authorities and private initiative committed to empower the Mexican women and eliminate inequality between men and women.

Throughout its trajectory, DEMAC has joined forces with:

- Educational and special education support centers, public and private libraries, cultural and artistic development centers, and research centers.
- Women Institutes, institutions taking care of female victims of violence and defending the human rights of women, human development centers, senior citizen care centers and associations promoting the gender equity.
- Social reinsertion centers, drug treatment centers, and violence prevention and attention agencies.
- Orphanages, health centers, disable women attention centers and rehabilitation centers. Associations taking care of terminally-ill women or close family members, and associations of stolen or missing children.
- Unions, museums, bookstores, and factories.
- Mayor's offices, auxiliary boards, community centers and facilities of the Family Integral Development System.
- Medium electronic media

## DEMAC and the New Media DEMAC Virtual Center

The internet—a basic tool to become visible and present before the public—has become a key channel for DEMAC, attracting the interest of many women through its website. Besides fulfilling a promotional and informative function, DEMAC's site intends to open its doors to any woman with access to the internet, to build a community of women around the world.

The dynamics of interactivity fostered by the digital world undoubtedly has enriched MEMAC's work. For that reason, in 2014 the DEMAC Virtual Center is developed, aiming to enhance the efforts of the organization through the new media. This new center aims to gather all the stories written by women and make them available to the public. The readers are able to consult texts published by our publishing house, read texts that received Honorable mentions and listen to podcasts on winning titles.

*DEMAC's Virtual Center has a photographic and an audio library which contains audiovisual files on Mexican women stories.*

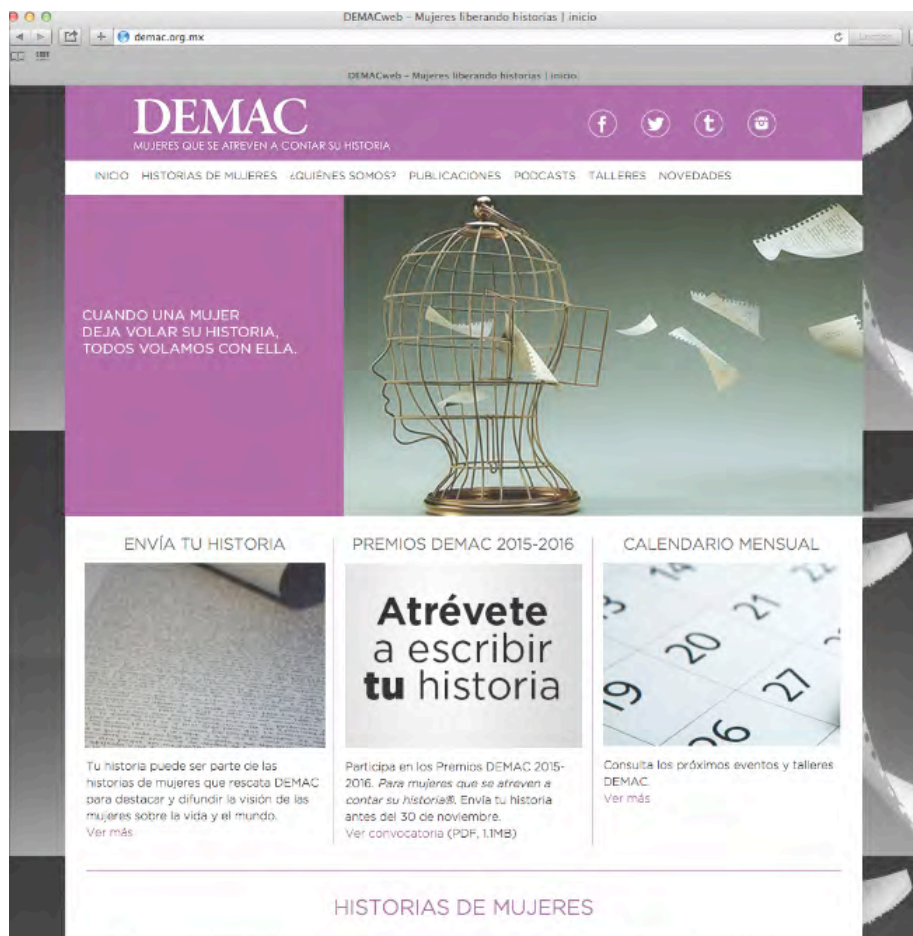
The Virtual Center projects DEMAC's work outward, because the fruits of its activities—workshops and competitions—are available to society, thus contributing to strengthen the presence

of women in the world of writing. Pioneer in the dissemination of the intimate reality of the female population, the DEMAC Virtual Center holds the only catalogue collecting autobiographical material in Latin America. Its visionary nature lies in the fact that these texts constitute a priceless testimony allowing us, on an historical, social and cultural level, to have knowledge of realities until now nameless in Latin America. Women who enter the Center can search autobiographical texts by subject, author or title, and can comment and provide feedback on what they read there. This exchange—as a blog in constant motion—enriches continuously the content of the Center, besides strengthening the bonds of the community with DEMAC.

DEMAC has exceeded its limits and has taken a step further, using technology tools to enhance its objectives. When visiting the Center, the user can write her story, which is at once incorporated into DEMAC's digital library so it can be read by the public, thus contributing to write the history of women. This process allows the new Center to become a space accessible so that any Spanish-speaking woman, from any latitude and origin, takes ownership of writing and becomes conscious of the female reality that she lives.

The Virtual Center collects texts on:

- Body, Health and Disease
- Culture and Education
- Human Rights
- Economy and Society
- Empowerment
- Empowerment
- Writings from Jail
- Family
- Philosophy, Religion and Spirituality
- Political and Social Participation





### DEMAC Virtual Workshop Word Carvers

In line with its efforts to motivate more women to dare to tell their story, DEMAC has developed a platform that allows the implementation of workshops in a virtual environment. DEMAC receives testimonies of women who write about their lives in other countries, making known the female realities outside Mexico. This procedure has attracted women of all socio-economic levels, as well as from the most diverse nationalities. Some of the countries in which DEMAC has found echo and an amazing participation are Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Spain, United States, Peru, Switzerland and Venezuela.

The workshop, offered via e-mail, follows the dynamics established for the face-to-face workshops. So far it has attracted more than 400 women who send weekly accounts of their lives and who, in turn, read the texts of other women. This has created among the participants a dynamic of continuous self-examination, and has also encouraged the discovery of other stories with which they can identify themselves, and that are also tools for self-assertiveness.



# EPILOGUE:

## DEMAC, SEED OF CHANGE

DEMAC's journey has been exciting and rewarding. Almost thirty years after its founding, Amparo Espinosa Rugarcía has managed to consolidate it as an organization wholly devoted, with absolute dedication, to the development and empowerment of Mexican women through the written word. The extraordinary response of the female population is a constant reminder of our country's immense need to have more spaces like this one, where the voice of women is properly valued and their perspective of the world is duly disseminated. Through its trajectory, DEMAC has managed to spark a revolution—paper and pen being its sole weapons—that has reached unimagined limits. Much remains to be done so that Mexican women make themselves known with their own voice and find their personal truth. There is also quite a bit to do so that Mexican society gets fully aware of the female reality. Women have yet to overcome the many and complex obstacles imposed on them by gender inequality. But at DEMAC, convinced both of the power of words and of the power they confer to those they free, we believe that the impact writing has had on the lives of so many women is a decisive step to transform the future, to bring about new generations of women who rise up against the establishment. Women who have shared their stories with DEMAC are the living proof of the possibilities available to those who take ownership of written word. Today they have become role models for other women, prototypes of behavior that will guide other women in the search of their own identity and their place in the world.

The competitions and the workshops have generated an unmatched heritage which represents the voice and the countenance of the Mexican women; a task unparalleled in our country. The future already has a new mission for DEMAC: the dissemination and distribution of this material beyond its community. These testimonies make up a valuable material for researchers and scholars as well as for the general public, as they are first-hand sources to have an in-depth knowledge of the national reality.

Change, personal ambition which distinguishes Amparo Espinosa, knows no limits. New publications, new workshops and calls keep cropping up year after year in response to the needs and interests of the community. A new project—inspired by artist Christian Boltanski's art installation *Les archives du cœur*—will gather women heartbeat recordings to symbolize what moves and drives Mexican women. This unique recording will leave in the memory of Mexican society the symbol of feminine life, source of our country's life.

DEMAC will continue multiplying its efforts to expand its activities, working tirelessly to bring writing to the life of more Mexican women and also of women from other countries who are yet to discover the transformative power of writing. Since gender inequality is a situation faced by the female population in so many countries, DEMAC's activities are relevant to a large number of women who still live under male values. Accordingly, DEMAC internationalization will lead to a joint effort with foreign women, thus creating an important exchange with the potential to sensitize civil society to the female reality around the world. There is another essential channel to boost DEMAC's work: digital media. The Virtual Center and the social networks will be the cornerstone for establishing with the community new links with the potential of enriching the dialogue and help position women where they belong: in the center!

True to its mission, DEMAC will remain being an exchange space contributing to the development of a society sensitive to women and their stories. Let's hope that, not too many years from now, DEMAC be witness to the revolution that it has unleashed within the female community of Mexico: that writing be a world conquered by women.

# ANNEXES:

## Chronology of Competitions

**1993-1994.** The first competition is called with the purpose of encouraging women to write their personal experiences, to rescue stories of forgotten women and to create a new feminine national image. The competition is open to authors of both genders.

-Winners: Alicia Villaneda, Martha Patricia Ponce Jiménez, Marcela Guijosa Aguirre

**1995-1996.** Three hundred works are received for this session. The competition starts to show signs of being an event exclusively feminine.

-Winners: Aurora Tovar Ramírez, Silvia Castillejos Peral

**1997-1998.** The call is opened for texts on businesswomen and benefactresses having contributed to Mexico's economic development and social welfare of Mexico.

-Winners: Martha Díaz de Kuri, Ana Emilia Villa Issa

**1998.** The first DEMAC Penitentiary Award for women in confinement is called. Texts come from 15 confinement centers of all over the country.

-Winner: Gladis Yamileth López Cortés

**1998** Southeast Regional DEMAC Awards. DEMAC calls Mexican women from the Southeast part of the country to tell their story. The competition is carried out with the patronage of the Instituto Oaxaqueño de las Culturas, the Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura and the Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores de Antropología Social.

-Winners: Delfina Aguilar Gómez, Rubí del Carmen Oseguera Rueda

**1999-2000.** Only autobiographical texts are received for this round of the competition. The jury is composed only by women.

-Winner: Graciela Hierro Perezcastro

**2000-2001.** Latin American Consciousness DEMAC Awards. The call compels Latin American women to write about their sin, body and sexuality related experiences but seen from the spirituality and religion perspective. To carry out the competition, DEMAC receives the support of the magazine Conciencia Latinoamericana, published by the Regional Network of Catholic Women for the Right to Decide.

-Winners: Ivonne Cervantes Corte (Mexico), Lidia Irene Nardi de Vega (Argentina)

**2001-2002.** The competition is devised as a vehicle for the social and cultural development of the country.

-Winners: Ana María Carrillo, Érika Mergruen

**2002.** Second DEMAC Penitentiary Award.

-Winner: Alexa



2003-2004. Special awards were given to Graciela Hierro Perez-castro, Rosa Krauze de Kolteniuk and María Antonieta Osornio Ramírez.

-Winners: Karla Moreno Chacón, Maribel López Martínez

2004. Third DEMAC Penitentiary Award.

-Winner: Celina Ferreyra Torres

2004. High School Graduates. Students of the Colegio de Bachilleres, of both genders, are called to write autobiographic texts. The winners are awarded a scholarship to study a university career.

-Winners: Elizabeth Mariana Hernández Arbisu, Ernesto Florentino Escobar

2005. Talking Portraits. For the first time, a Photography Contest is called with pictures portraying stories about Mexican women.

-Winners: María E. Martínez Caire, Karla Castillo Ovando, Gertrudis Fierro González, Luis Rodríguez Acosta

2005-2006. For this session, the biography genre calls the contestants to write about wives of Mexican presidents.

-Winners - biography genre: Alicia Aguilar Castro, Rosa María Valles Ruiz

-Winners - autobiography genre: Gloria Ariceaga, Olga Frangie de Harfuch, Yvonne González-Baéz Luján, Guadalupe Zubieta Valenzuela

2006. Fourth DEMAC Penitentiary Award

-Winner: Ana Cecilia Contreras Moreno



2007-2008. DEMAC Award For women who dare to tell their story®

-Winners: Emma Cárdenas, Celine Armenta

2008. Gender Equality in the Media. DEMAC calls to this session with the patronage of the Citizens Council for Gender Equality in the Media and the Right to Information of Women. The essays received explore the subject of women and the media, the right to information and women before the media.

-Winner: Abril Violeta Zarco Iturbe

2008. Mexican Women in Switzerland. DEMAC, together with the Association of Mexican Women in Geneva and Amigos de México, calls the Mexican women living in Switzerland to write autobiographic texts on their experience of living abroad.

-Winners: Franziska Surber, Martha Reyes

2008. DEMAC Querétaro Awards: The Grandmothers of today. For this session, the DEMAC Queretaro Branch invites grandmothers to write a letter to their granddaughters.

-Winners: Lidia Aspuru Lloréns, María Antonieta Osornio Ramírez, María Domínguez García

2008 Fifth DEMAC Penitentiary Award

-Winners: La Enamorada, María Elena Moreno Márquez

2009-2010. Stories about personal revolution, freedom and Independence. On the occasion of the Bicentennial of the Independence and the Centennial of the Revolution, the contestants are called to write their stories as independent women.

-Winners: Josefina Gutiérrez Martínez, Morelia Peña Belmonte

2010. Sixth DEMAC Penitentiary Award

-Winner: Teresa Ramos Moxo

2011. DEMAC Querétaro Awards: Letter to my grandmother. DEMAC branch in the State of Querétaro calls women of that state to write a letter to their grandmothers.

-Winners: Lidia Aspuru Lloréns, Roxana Lara Muñoz

2011-2012. For this session of the competition, DEMAC asks for texts highlighting the invisible and extraordinary roles of women as life companions and wives.

-Winners: Eliana Alvarado Noriega, Érika Eloísa Chaidez López, Alicia Ayora Talavera, Fátima García Lastra

2012. Barcelona/Chihuahua: The global crisis and me. Texts received describe how the economic and social crisis affected the life of women, their roles and their identity in Mexico and Spain. DEMAC calls together with the Barcelona University Duoda Women Research Center.

-Winners: Manuela Armendáriz Baeza (Chihuahua), Laura Vanina Muñoz (Barcelona)

2012. Seventh DEMAC Penitentiary Award

-Winner: Judith Díaz Francisco

2013-2014. DEMAC Awards For women who dare to tell their story

-Winners: Mariana Pedroza, Iliana Fernanda Rivas Ahumada

2014. Why I am still Catholic? DEMAC, together with Catholic Women for the Right to Decide, calls the Ibero-American Women to an essay competition.

-Winners: Marcela Gallegos Ruiz, Margarita García Mora, Frida Varinia Ramos Koprivitza, Lourdes Raymundo Sabino, Sonia Corral Villar

2014. Eighth DEMAC Penitentiary Award

-Winners: Valeria Piedad Pérez Cruz, Nayeli Denice Valencia Reyes

## DEMAC Branches and Representations

### Puebla Branch

-It started its activities in 2002.

-It was the first branch to organize its own workshops.

-It has implemented several supplementary activities, such as a film club, a reading club, conferences and theater dramatizations of autobiographical texts.

-It gave the workshop Theatre of the Oppressed, with the purpose of generating, through the staging, a sense of community that could help the participants to create and reflect.

-It is the first branch giving a workshop aimed at illiterate women, for whom the world of writing is completely alien: the Dem-Arte workshop. Through artistic activities, women speak of autobiographical themes and are able to express their ideas and emotions.

-In 2003, this branch prompted the first DEMAC Workshop For women in confinement who dare to tell their story, given at the women's CERESO San Miguel, Puebla.

-Through donations, it has created a library with more than 800 titles that it lends to confined women.

-It has worked giving workshops to women with AIDS, mothers of children with cancer, cancer survivors and mothers of children with cerebral palsy.

### Chihuahua Branch

-It started its activities in 2004.

-It has created a pictures archive and a newspaper and periodical archive with documents relating to DEMAC activities.

-Its activities reach the municipalities of Chihuahua, Delicias, Jiménez, Parral, Cuauhtemoc, San Juanito, Serdán, Aldama and Creel.

-It has developed an autobiography workshop for 14-17 year olds.

-It has created five traveling libraries with titles published by DEMAC.

-It held two meetings with the state DEMAC workshop coordinators who carry out activities in the various municipalities.

-It took part in the organization of the special competition Barcelona-Chihuahua: The global crisis and me, in which Chihuahua women left a proof of how the economic crisis impacted their lives.



- It carries out a literary Café in which women read their writings and share them with an open audience.
- It held the first meeting of the state DEMAC coordinators responsible for organizing the activities in each municipality.
- To commemorate the fifth anniversary of the branch, it promoted the publication of the book Ah Chihuahua... they dared!, product of the autobiographical workshops conducted in the State, which includes 43 Chihuahua women's writings.

### Querétaro Branch

- It began its activities in 2005.
- It has given workshops to autochthonous women.
- To disseminate DEMAC's Mission, it has participated in fairs and meetings of related associations such as Equidad de Género, Congreso de la Mujer, Encuentro de Asociaciones Pro Salud Mental del estado de Querétaro, Centro de Estudios y Formación Integral de la Mujer, Feria Estatal de la Mujer, among others.
- It organized the special competitions Today's grandmothers and Letter to my grandmother where women explored their family links and their relevance in their personal development.
- It carried out a community newspaper pilot project at the Carrillo Puerto community, for which a team of journalism students and community women was formed. The team produced a publication to motivate women to communicate in writing, to promote that they were informed about local issues and to generate proposals to improve their environment.
- It has organized thematic gatherings to which women carry writings to read them in public, thus stimulating the written expression.
- It carried out a bookbinding workshop at the end of a DEMAC Workshop For women who dare to tell their story® so that women could give their texts the quality and shape of a book.

### Xalapa, Veracruz, Representation

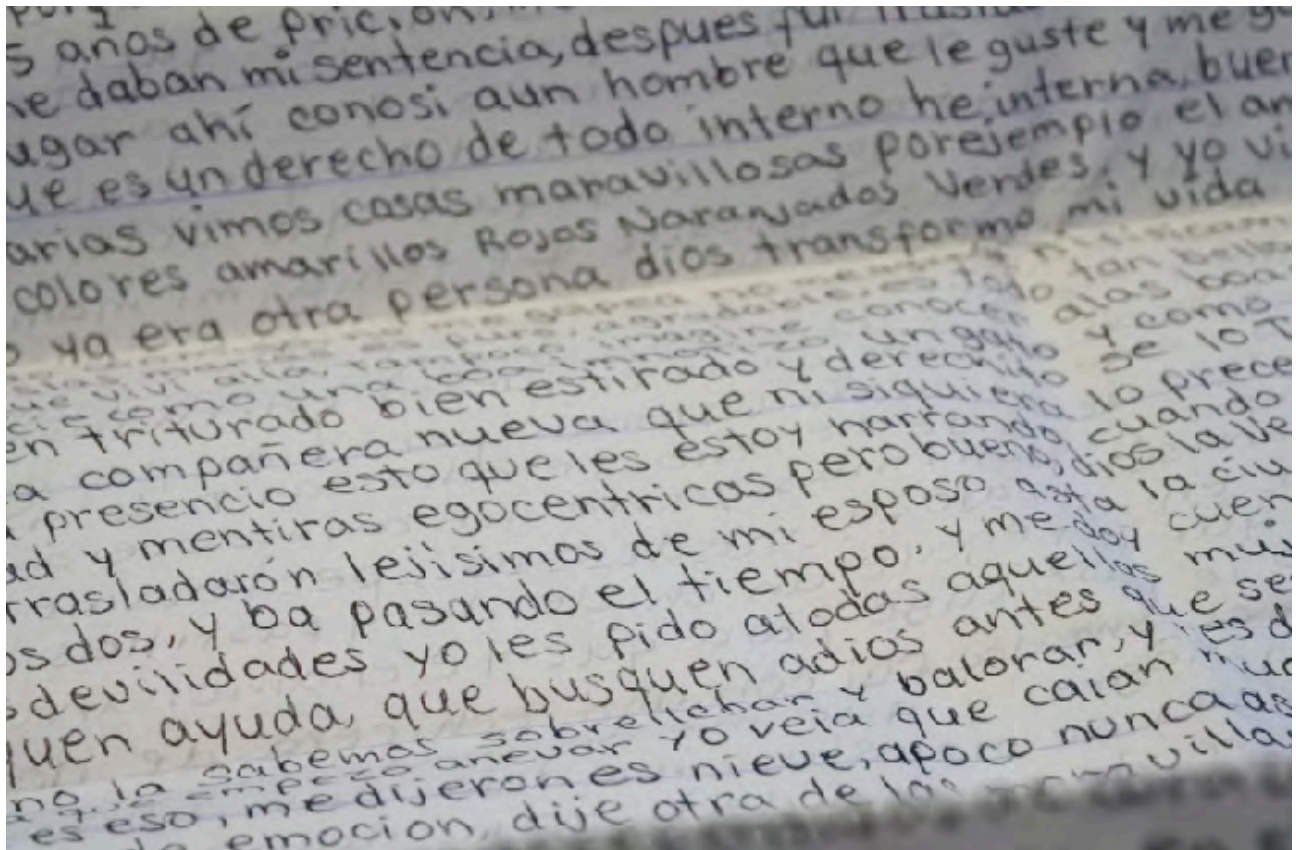
- It started its activities in 2011.
- Although its central office is located in the city of Xalapa, its activities encompass the cities of Playa Vicente, Coatepec, Banderillas and Veracruz.
- In 2012, it called a workshop To lose the fear of writing® directed at the Patronas, women who lend a hand to the immigrants traveling aboard the train called "The Beast" on their journey to the United States.
- The creation of DEMAC Women Meeting Circles that have multiplied and prosper stands out.

### San Luis Potosí (temporary) Representation

- This representation operated during six months during 2010.
- It gave a DEMAC Workshop For women in confinement who dare to tell their story at the La Pila CERESO of San Luis Potosí.
- It gave a DEMAC Workshop To lose the fear of writing® at the Matehuala Reclusion Center.
- It extended its activities to Ciudad Valles and rural communities of the Santa Catalina and Huehuetlán municipalities.
- It promoted a close relation with related institutions and local media.

## CERESOS” Where DEMAC Has Given Workshops

- Women’s CERESO San Miguel, Puebla, Puebla.
- CERESO San Pedro, Cholula, Puebla.
- State CERESO, Pachuca, Hidalgo.
- Federal Women’s CERESO Rehilete, Islas Mariás Penitentiary Complex.
- CERESO 04, Tapachula, Chiapas.
- CERESO 05, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas.
- CERESO 14 El Amate, Antapala de Figueroa, Chiapas.
- Low Risk Unit, Chihuahua, Chihuahua.
- CERESO Aquiles Serdán, Chihuahua, Chihuahua.
- Municipal CERESO, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua.
- Women’s Social Rehabilitation Center, Santa Martha Acatitla, Mexico City.
- CERESO Tepepan, Mexico City.
- State Reclusion Center La Pila, San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosí.
- CERESO Cienaguillas, Zacatecas, Zacatecas.
- CERESO San José el Alto, Querétaro, Querétaro.



## Book Fairs Participation Record

2001

July

-First Ibero-American Gathering of Alternative Publishers (Guadalajara, Jalisco)

November

-XV Guadalajara International Book Fair (Guadalajara, Jalisco)

2002

March

-International Women's Day (Mexico City)

2003

March

-International Women's Day (Mexico City)

2004

March

-International Women's Day (Mexico City)

April

-III Coyoacán Literature Fair (Mexico City)

-Centro Banamex Word Festival (Mexico City)

September

-XXIII National Polytechnic Institute Book Fair (Mexico City)

2005

March

-International Women's Day (Mexico City)

May

-IV Coyoacán Literature Fair (Mexico City)

2006

March

-International Women's Day (Mexico City)

April

-Centro Banamex Word Festival (Mexico City)

June

-XVI Leon National Book Fair (León, Guanajuato)

-Second International Gathering of the Sea (Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz)

August

-Gender Studies International Book Fair (Mexico City)



## September

- VII Hermosillo Book Fair (Hermosillo, Sonora)

## 2007

### March

- International Women's Day (Xochimilco Municipality, Mexico City)
- International Women's Day (Mexico City Zócalo Square)

### April

- Mexiquense Institute Book Fair (Toluca, State of Mexico)

### June

- Third International Gathering of the Sea (Coatzacoalcas, Veracruz)

## September

- International University Book Fair (Xalapa, Veracruz)

### October

- Seventh International Book Fair (Mexico City Zócalo Square)

### November

- XXIV Oaxaca International Book Fair (Oaxaca, Oaxaca)
- XXI Guadalajara International Book Fair (Guadalajara, Jalisco)

### December

- 7th Reading Festival, Paseo de la Reforma (Mexico City)

## 2008

### March

- International Women's Day (Mexico City Zócalo Square)

### May

- Fourth International Gathering of the Sea (Coatzacoalcas, Veracruz)

### August

- 2008 Zacatecas National Book Fair (Zacatecas, Zacatecas)

### October

- Eighth International Book Fair (Mexico City Zócalo Square)

### November

- Atizapán Book Fair (Atizapán, State of Mexico)

### December

- 8th Reading Festival, Paseo de la Reforma (Mexico City)

## 2009

### March

- International Women's Day (Mexico City)

## June

- 2009 Zacatecas National Book Fair (Zacatecas, Zacatecas)
- First Durango Book Fair (Durango, Durango)

## September

- XXI Anthropology and History Book Fair (Mexico City)

## October

- Ninth International Book Fair (Mexico City Zócalo Square)
- 2009 PYME Women's Forum
- San Miguel de Allende Book Fair (San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato)

## December

- XXIII Guadalajara International Book Fair (Guadalajara, Jalisco)
- 2010

## 2010

### February

- 9th Reading Festival, Paseo de la Reforma (Mexico City)
- XXXI Palacio de Minería International Book Fair (Mexico City)

### March

- International Women's Day (Álvaro Obregón Municipality, Mexico City)
- International Women's Day at the Boy Heroes Monument (Mexico City)

### April

- Spring of Book. 1st Azcapotzalco Book Fair (Azcapotzalco Municipality, Mexico City)

### May

- XXI Leon National Book Fair (León, Guanajuato)

### August

- 2010 Zacatecas National Book Fair (Zacatecas, Zacatecas)

## September

- XXII Anthropology and History Book Fair (Mexico City)
- University Book International Fair (Xalapa, Veracruz)

## October

- Tenth International Book Fair (Mexico City Zócalo Square)
- XIX Monterrey International Book Fair (Monterrey, Nuevo León)

## December

- XXIV Guadalajara International Book Fair (Guadalajara, Jalisco)

## 2011

### February

- VII Ibero-American Carlos Pellicer Cámara Poetry Gathering (Villahermosa, Tabasco)
- XXXII Palacio de Minería International Book Fair (Mexico City)

## March

- II Book Fair at the Suburban Train (Mexico City)

## April

- 5th Big Book Sell-off at the National Auditorium (Mexico City)

## May

- XXII León National Book Fair (León, Guanajuato)

## September

- 1st Interlomas Park Book Fair (Huixquilucan, State of México)
- First Puebla University Book Fair (Puebla, Puebla)
- XXIII Anthropology and History Book Fair (Mexico City)
- 2011 Chihuahua Book Fair (Chihuahua, Chihuahua)

## October

- Colima University Altexto Book Fair (Colima, Colima)
- Eleventh International Book Fair (Mexico City Zócalo Square)

## November

- FULTABASCO Tabasco University Book Fair (Villahermosa, Tabasco)

## December

- XXV Guadalajara International Book Fair (Guadalajara, Jalisco)

## 2012

### February

- First Texcoco Publishers Fair (Texcoco, State of México)
- XXXIII Palacio de Minería International Book Fair (Mexico City)
- University Studies Free School Book Fair (Mexico City)

## April

- 6th Big Book Sell-off at the National Auditorium (Mexico City)
- University Book International Fair (Xalapa, Veracruz)

## May

- XXIII León National Book Fair (León, Guanajuato)

## August

- XIV Publishers, Graphic Arts and Compact Disc Industry National Fair, FENIE 2012 (Toluca, State of México)

## September

- XXIV Anthropology and History Book Fair (Mexico City)
- XXVIII Chapingo Book Fair (Texcoco, State of México)

## October

- Twelfth International Book Fair (Mexico City, Zócalo Square)



## 2013

### February

- XXXIV Palacio de Minería Internacional Book Fair (Mexico City)

### March

- 2nd Yucatán International Reading Fair (Mérida, Yucatán)

### April

- 7th Big Book Sell-off at the National Auditorium (Mexico City)
- Ibero-American University Cultural Book Fair (Mexico City)
- Tlatelolco University Cultural Center Book and Rose Party (Mexico City)
- University Book International Fair (Xalapa, Veracruz)

### May

- 1st Tlalnepantla Internacional Book Fair (Tlalnepantla, State of México)

### June

- 31st Tijuana Book Fair (Tijuana, Baja California)

### August

- 26th University Book Fair (Pachuca, Hidalgo)
- XV Publishers, Graphic Arts and Compact Disc Industry National Fair, FENIE 2013 (Toluca, State of México)

### September

- 2013 Ciudad Juárez Book Fair (Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua)
- XXV Anthropology and History Book Fair (Mexico City)

### October

- 2013 Chihuahua Book Fair (Chihuahua, Chihuahua)
- Ciudad Hidalgo del Parral Book Fair (Parral, Chihuahua)
- XIII International Book Fair (Mexico City, Zócalo Square)
- Benito Juárez Municipality International Book Fair (Benito Juárez Municipality, Mexico City)

## 2014

### February

- XL Expo Books and Magazines, UNAM Faculty of Accounting and Administration (Mexico City)
- XXXV Palacio de Minería Internacional Book Fair (Mexico City)

### April

- 8th Big Book Sell-off at the National Auditorium (Mexico City)
- Tlatelolco University Cultural Center Book and Rose Party (Mexico City)
- 2014 Public Expo (Mexico City)

### May

- University Book International Fair (Xalapa, Veracruz)

### August

- XVI Publishers, Graphic Arts and Compact Disc Industry National Fair, FENIE 2014 (Toluca, State of México)
- 2014 Zacatecas Nacional Book Fair (Zacatecas, Zacatecas)

### September

- 2014 Ciudad Juárez Book Fair (Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua)
- XXVI Anthropology and History Book Fair (Mexico City)

### October

- XIV Chihuahua State Book Fair (Chihuahua, Chihuahua)
- 2014 Ciudad Hidalgo del Parral Book Fair (Parral, Chihuahua)
- XIV International Book Fair (Mexico City, Zócalo Square)

### November

- V Gran Nayar Fair (Tepic, Nayarit)

### 2015

#### February

- XXXVI Palacio de Minería International Book Fair (Mexico City)

#### March

- 4th Yucatán International Reading Fair (Mérida, Yucatán)
- 9th Big Book Sell-off at the National Auditorium (Mexico City)

#### April

- University Book International Fair (Xalapa, Veracruz)

#### July

- Faro de Oriente Book Street Market (Mexico City)

#### August

- XXVIII University Book Fair, FUL (Pachuca, Hidalgo)





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Daniela Gutiérrez Flores  
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