

**Events at Dartington Hall, Totness to celebrate the lives of Marina and Carito Rodriguez Vega
Friday 27 to Sunday 29 April 2018.**

Hearts of Giants: from refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War to much loved teachers at Dartington School.

Barbara Coombs

The weekend of events to celebrate the lives of Marina and Carito had been organised to bring together people who had loved them, and had their lives improved in very tangible ways and also by sometimes very small things. The two sisters had travelled on the *SS Habana* and after their stay at the camp at North Stoneham had found sanctuary in the Langham Colony at Colchester. They met Margarita Camps who encouraged them to move onto Dartington School and there with support they were able to achieve their ambition to become teachers.



The weekend began where it had to with a beautifully prepared monologue with music performed by Deborah Paige on the life of Marina. How her life was defined by her most special relationship with her sister Carito and by the tragedy of Spain. Her life did not stop with tragedy but carried on to encompass a very happy life in Devon. The photo shows the 4000 paper dollies created by Deborah and friends which framed the performances. The second performance was powerful language of poetry and song of contemporary refugee experiences.

Throughout the weekend the exhibition of the sisters' lives, the exhibition of the Basque Children Association, and the exhibition of Southampton University generates much interest and attention.

On Saturday Steve Bowles' film 'the Guernica Children' was shown to a full house again. In the afternoon a forum discussion in which Simon Martinez of the Basque Children Association spoke amongst other panel members on the experience of refugees and how local communities in Devon could help the refugees of today make new lives for themselves. Saturday ended with a celebratory meal with what else on the menu but Marina's favourite tortilla español, manchego cheese, and paella.

On the Sunday another full house discussed the future of education. Progressive education was at the heart of Marina and Carito's lives and the discussion reflected the passion and belief, heart and head with which the audience came to the discussion. Sunday ended with a charity auction to raise money for South Devon Refugee Aid.



I met some wonderful people over the weekend including Joan Camps the biographer of Margarita Camps, and the many, many friends of the two *niñas* who had such personal stories of the two sisters. John, Bethan, Huw, Deborah, Graham, Tattwa, Lucy thank you. Thank you Dartington Hall.