

## Moving Ahead on NAFTA: The Alliance for Responsible Trade

- by Tom Loudon

The Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART) is a coalition of over 30 US-based organizations working together to propose sustainable and just trade alternatives and to oppose the current trade model promoted by the US.

ART is the US Chapter of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA). The HSA includes networks and social movements from Canada to South America working together to enact new trade policies based on principals of economic justice, mutuality, commitment to the poor and care of the environment.

Corporate globalization is expanding its vast international web that exploits human beings and the environment to maximize profit for a few. ART is working to unravel this web, with efforts such as:

- Exposing corporate efforts to expand NAFTA - already a disaster for the environment, working people and farmers in Canada, Mexico and the US. The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) is an initiative launched by President Bush in 2005 to use NAFTA to create a regional security plan that will criminalize migration and create militarized borders around all three countries.
- Promoting policy alternatives like the People's Trade Agreement, a Bolivian Government proposal for insuring that trade contributes to equality and decent living for the majority rather than increasing poverty and corporate profits.
- Sponsoring delegations of HSA members from México, Central and South America to inform the U.S. policy debate and to coordinate efforts with social movements here, such as the U.S. Social Forum in June 2007.
- In October, ART sent international observers to witness the first-ever referendum on a free trade agreement giving the people of Costa Rica a chance to vote on ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The ART team reported violations of electoral law, including some by representatives of the US government. We launched a national solidarity letter that generated 200 organizational and individual signatures to the OAS asking them to pressure the Costa Rican government not to ratify the fraudulent results.
- Coordinating efforts with the Colombian community in the United States to

STOP the U.S.-Colombia FTA that the Bush administration could introduce early this year.

If you would like to receive regular reports and action alerts, or for organizing suggestions in your local community, send us an email at: [art-list@quixote.org](mailto:art-list@quixote.org) and visit our website at: [www.art-us.org](http://www.art-us.org).

*[The author is Co-Director of the Quixote Center and National Coordinator of ART.]*

**[Ed. note:** As we go to press, activists from the three countries - including Tom Loudon - are meeting in Mexico to plan further how to oppose the implementation of NAFTA's final stage (cutting Mexican tariffs on corn and beans). They will be working with US Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), who has drafted a bill, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Accountability Act, H.R. 4329. This legislation would require evaluation of NAFTA impacts and renegotiation or withdrawal from NAFTA if certain conditions are not met. H.R. 4329 currently is co-sponsored by Representatives Boyda (D-KS), Hunter (R-CA), Phil Hare (D-IL), Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), Mike Michaud (D-ME), Tim Ryan (D-OH), Betty Sutton (D-OH), and Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ). Important meeting about this legislation to be held in DC in March. See [www.art-us.org](http://www.art-us.org) for details. ]



*Police repression of the National Protest Against Mining, 7/07, at Spakapa, Guatemala. A Rights Action delegation with the Sina Valley Defense Committee reports toxic wastes from open pit cyanide leeching mining by Goldcorp of Canada; also many health defects, clear-cutting of forests, water depletion in 20 creeks, and contaminated wells. It takes two tons of the mountain to get 0.79 gm of marketable gold. A petition has been filed with the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)*

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Editorial

**Unanswered Questions in US-Latin America Policy**

In our last editorial, "To Blog or Not to Blog," the question was to see if - by sharing thoughts through the internet - we could answer some tough, persistent questions about Latin America. If you are not accustomed to blogs perhaps you'd be interested in taking a minute to follow these steps:

First, go to our new INTERCONNECT website, [www.interconn.org](http://www.interconn.org).

Then click on "blog" and run down the blog page for the list of questions or "categories."

1. Venezuela: What is the current role of the US in undermining democracy there?
2. Haiti: What is the current role of the US and UN in disrupting that nation?
3. Immigration: Is this a case of the Powers vs. any solution?
4. NAFTA: Is it realistic to consider a national campaign to end NAFTA?
5. Truth: Is a truth campaign necessary to organize a strong progressive movement?

If you're interested in, for example, #4, click on "NAFTA" and read the comments.

Then, if you want to contribute to the discussion, click on "comment" at the bottom and add your own questions or answers. (For those of you without computers you will find Peggy Valdes' blog about NAFTA in this issue.)

What do you think? Could this be a useful tool for the movement?

**End NAFTA (a "comment" from the Blog)**

- by Peggy Valdés

**W**hy not a new campaign to defeat NAFTA? We have fresh allies in this struggle! In Chicago, on January 2nd, Centro Sin Fronteras (a small but very vocal grassroots, community-based organization) staged a protest and press conference in the middle of Chicago's financial district to oppose the last phase of NAFTA, disappearance of protective tariffs on the importation of basic crops like corn, beans, and sugar to Mexico. Their focus was the direct effect NAFTA has had on immigration. I saw the local news coverage and it was pretty good. The reporter made the connection between NAFTA destroying the ability of farmers in Mexico to compete against US subsidized crops and the number of immigrants.

It's significant that community-based groups here (social movements in Mexico already made the connection years ago!) are now making that huge jump from local issues to global policies... We have a real bread and butter issue in the current immigration debate that makes it easier for us to explain.

I know folks have been working on NAFTA for a long time and feel discouraged since this last phase of NAFTA went through without much opposition. But I think ten years of education and real facts on the direct effects of NAFTA have paved the way for a renewed effort to oppose this trade policy. ART (Alliance for Responsible Trade), Public Citizen, CIP, and other organizations have done excellent work in gathering the information anyone needs to discuss such lofty subjects as Foreign Trade issues around our kitchen tables. Let's take this dinosaur down. We can do this. We just have to agree on two things that will unite the immigrant



rights movement, solidarity groups, and labor and trade policies activists:

-We need an immigration policy that takes into account that our foreign trade policy has caused the increased numbers of immigrants; and we have to take responsibility for this by creating a path to legalization for everyone here until the root cause is remedied.

**Get rid of NAFTA.** We must redefine our development goals with trade agreements that will assure sustainable economic benefits for all our partners. Economic benefits that will strengthen their economies and that will eventually benefit the US by creating stronger partners and markets for the US.

*[The author is an organizer at Mexico Solidarity Network, peggy@mexicosolidarity.org, www.mexicosolidarity.org.]*

## Not Your Backyard Anymore:

### Ecuador Rejects Renewal of US Military Presence at Manta Air Base

- by Timi Gerson

Next year the US Air Force Southern Command's 10-year usage rights for the Eloy Afaro airbase in Manta, Ecuador expire. Notification that the agreement to use the base - simply known as "Manta" for its location in that coastal city - would not be renewed by the Ecuadorean government sent shock waves through Washington. Pundits decried the move as further evidence of "anti-Americanism" on the part of President Rafael Correa. Congress noted that Ecuador's current trade preferences program could face termination if the country did not reconsider. The press played up the decision as the latest salvo in the fight for Latin American hearts and minds between the US and Venezuela. In the midst of all the hand wringing, the "expert" analysis missed the point: Closing Manta is much more about Ecuador's domestic priorities than about some geopolitical popularity contest.

Ecuador finds itself in a tough neighborhood. Its precarious position lies between two major coca-producing nations (Peru to the south and Colombia to the north) with the added spillover on the northern border of the Colombian civil war in the form of refugees and guerrilla activity. Having pledged a strict policy of non-intervention in the Colombian conflict, Ecuador has assiduously policed its borders with more than 11,000 national troops that dismantled more than 70 "irregular" bases on Ecuadorean soil last year. To fly over the northern border is to watch the political and economic landscape change before your eyes - less than 30 miles from the coca fields of Colombia lie the flower fields of Ecuador. The millions of Colombian refugees living in Ecuador are not housed in camps along the border, but fully integrated into Ecuadorean society. The flower sector provides higher wages than the illicit drug trade.

The Ecuadorean public is intensely wary of anything that would involve their country in the tragic conflict next door. Ironically, it was not Correa, but the

Alfredo Palacios government that began questioning the US military presence at Manta. Through a series of national consultations, it became clear that Ecuadoreans saw Manta as a thinly veiled excuse for the US to wage covert war in Colombia, implicating Ecuador and complicating its carefully balanced non-interventionist stance.

Furthermore, the development opportunities supposedly offered by the base - increased employment, foreign investment, tourism and new infrastructure - never materialized. In its place, the presence of foreign troops resulted in an exploitative sex worker industry, a rise in the cost of living, the expropriation of land from farmers for base activities and the militarization of the port of Manta to the detriment of the traditional fishing economy.

Ecuadoreans might accept all of these things if they thought that these troops kept them safer. But the public is also aware of Ecuador's ability to successfully police its borders and defend its sovereignty without the help of foreign troops. They don't need them - and it turns out that 82 percent of Ecuadoreans don't want them either. Ecuadoreans want a ban on all foreign troops on Ecuadorean soil, whether they come from the US, Venezuela, Chile, France, Zimbabwe, Fiji or anywhere else.

The biggest change in Latin America over the past decade may be the thing that is hardest for the US to accept: it just isn't about us anymore.

*[The author, formerly with Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, is now with Fenton Communications (www.fenton.com) and the Free the Cuban Five Committee.]*

**We do not inherit the world from our ancestors - We borrow it from our children.**

**Native American proverb**



Konbit Pou Ayiti/KONPAY (Working Together for Haiti) focuses on Haitian solutions to environmental, social and economic problems and provides training and funding to grassroots and community-based projects. KONPAY is supporting Haitian-led efforts to reforest Haiti and protect the environment. Here a young man picks up seedlings. The goal for 2008 is to plant 50,000 trees! [elise@konpay.org](mailto:elise@konpay.org).

## Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods (SOIL)

- by Sarah Brownell

Suffering from hundreds of years of slavery, dictatorships, political turmoil, economic exploitation, and human rights violations, Haiti has long been the United States' poorest neighbor.

The Haitian people, however, have an unquenchable desire for freedom, an amazing resilience, and a faith in democracy such that they would walk an entire day, stand hours in line in the hot sun, and rub their calloused thumbs on stones to reveal their fingerprints—just to participate in elections. Whenever there is a small space made for acceptance in the climate of repression, grassroots groups spring forth. SOIL is a part of a new renaissance of hope and energy that is pushing up out of the land in Haiti.

No matter how you calculate it, poverty is still the most insidious and devastating human rights violation in Haiti, killing and undermining the spirit of millions of people, including those of us who might only hear about Haiti in passing on a TV news show or in a newsletter. When so many people do not have access to clean water, enough food, a grade school education, a job, health care, or even a private place to go to the bathroom, how can anyone's spirit be at ease? We at SOIL don't just believe in building environmentally sustainable infrastructures and programs, but in nurturing the skills, hope, and spirit of the people—including ourselves.

Our technology centers give local people the choice over which life-saving technologies are best for their community and support them to conduct their own research experiments. Our participatory education programs allow folks trained in US universities and those trained on the land to exchange knowledge and ideas. Our collaborations with women's groups, peasant organizations, and youth groups, allow simple technologies that protect health and the environment

to find their way to the poorest slums and most remote villages.

*[The author is an engineer and co-founder of SOIL. This article excerpted from the SOIL newsletter. Send your mailing address to [soil\\_info@yahoo.com](mailto:soil_info@yahoo.com) for a beautiful paper version of the newsletter.]*

## Uruguay Update

- by Brent Buxton

In Uruguay's October 2004 presidential election, Tabaré Vázquez—nominee of the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) Party—prevailed with 50.45 per cent of the vote. Inaugurated on March 1, 2005, his administration represents the first break from the country's domination by its two traditional moderate parties, the National (Blanco) and Colorado parties, in over a century. Although he is a man of the moderate left, Vázquez has a strong reputation as a pragmatist, and the changes in economic policy which have taken place during his tenure have reflected this.

Immediately after he assumed the presidency, Vázquez instituted an extensive emergency social welfare plan called Plan de Atención Nacional de Emergencia Social (PANES), which allocates subsidies to poor families in exchange for community work, as well as food, health services, temporary housing, and other services for the poor. This was an addition to the country's existing welfare system, already one of the most extensive in the region.

This new spending program did not impede Uruguay from paying back its massive debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in November



2006. However, Uruguayan economic officials still pledged to continue to follow the orthodox economic policies agreed to in the original understanding with the IMF, which include fiscal conservatism, a focus on minimizing inflation, and structural reform of the economy. In December 2007, Uruguay joined the Bank of the South, a financial institution originally proposed by left-leaning Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. The new institution is seen by many as an alternative to the IMF and World Bank; and its founders promise that it will diverge from the mainstream lending institutions' practice of pushing for orthodox economic reforms.

In his foreign economic policy, Vázquez has encouraged foreign investment while taking more cautious steps in regards to trade liberalization. In 2005, Uruguay approved a Bilateral Investment Treaty with the US, which went into effect in late 2006. Also in late 2006, however, Vázquez decided not to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) with Washington, something that had been under negotiation since the previous president's term. Rather, he opted to pursue a more limited Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), which was signed by Uruguay in January 2007.

Vázquez is currently pushing for a constitutional amendment to permit consecutive presidential reelection, which would allow him to run again when his five-year term expires. In an early attempt to build support for his campaign, Vázquez is working on a proposal to reduce retirement requirements for public sector workers, a move popular with labor unions.

*[The author is Research Fellow, Council on Hemispheric Affairs.]*

Ed. note: Almost two years ago Uruguay stopped sending troops for training at the SOA (now Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.)

## Join us at the Venezuela Symposium, April 18-21 in DC

- by Banbose Shango

The Venezuelan Solidarity Network (VSN) was created in March 2006 at a meeting of numerous solidarity groups in support of Venezuela at George Washington University.

The basic purposes of the VSN are to increase communication among groups that oppose US intervention in Venezuela, support the right of the Venezuelan people to self-determination, and support the Bolivarian revolution. The VSN also seeks to enlist additional progressive groups into Venezuela solidarity work, and facilitate our ability to unite in joint actions. VSN committees report to the Steering Committee; and any national or local group that agrees with the VSN Mission Statement is welcome to join. We seek to build the broadest possible solidarity with Venezuela across ideologies, faiths, nationalities, ethnicities, genders, and class.

Over its short existence the VSN has taken delegations to Venezuela, hosted Venezuelan delegations in the US, participated in numerous panels and oral presentations, organized film showings, and Venezuelan Solidarity Days. VSN also waged a successful public campaign that forced a major video game company to make major changes, delaying the release of "Mercenaries 2: World in Flames" (a game which was set in Venezuela). We have also addressed press conferences, radio and television interviews.

Currently, VSN is organizing an international symposium on Venezuela (a teach-in and a concentrated course on the Bolivarian revolution) to be held April 18-21 at Howard University in Washington, DC. Through an objective analysis of the situation in Venezuela, it seeks to inform the public in general, and the progressive and left sectors of US society in particular, about the truth. The left has been bombarded by the Bush Administration and other right wing propaganda laced with lies, myths, and innuendoes. Panels by leading Venezuelan and US academics and popular movement leaders will be the prescription to cure these maladies.

*[The author is Eastern Regional Coordinator of the VSN. [www.vensolidarity.org](http://www.vensolidarity.org), 202-544-9355, [VSN@afgj.org](mailto:VSN@afgj.org). The VSN seeks volunteers, resources, and donations.]*

**Wherever I go...there seem to be hundreds, thousands, more who are open to unorthodox ideas. But they tend not to know of one another's existence...The very people who are disheartened by the absence of a national movement are themselves proof of the potential for such a movement.**

**Howard Zinn (from "The Optimism of Uncertainty," Independent Politics! Winter 2008)**

## Damming the Flood

- a book review by Brian Concannon Jr., Esq.

Haitians call themselves the laboratwa - the laboratory - because the US government experiments with techniques for undermining popular democracy there and applies the most successful techniques elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide and the Politics of Containment*, by Peter Hallward, recounts how the US, along with Canada, France, and Haitian elites, completed "perhaps the most successful act of imperial sabotage since the end of the Cold War" - the undermining of Haiti's progressive Lavalas movement, culminating in the coup d'état of February 2004.

*Damming the Flood* starts with a quick overview of Haitian history since 1791, with an emphasis on the centuries-old conflict between the majority of Haitians who are impoverished and Haitian elites, supported by the media and organizations they control. The book then moves on to the rise of the Lavalas movement following the ouster of Jean Claude Duvalier in 1986, including the movement's regular landslide victories at the polls, and the equally regular undermining of these victories from Washington.

Hallward's centerpiece is the disparate international reaction to the two anti-Lavalas coup d'états, one in 1991, the other in 2004. Both coups overthrew the same highly popular President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In both cases thousands of Haitian grassroots activists and democracy supporters were killed, while many more were tortured, beaten, jailed and forced into hiding. In 1991, human rights groups, the media, the UN and even the Bush Administration condemned the coup as a blow against democracy. But in 2004, the same institutions hailed the similar coup as an advance for democracy.

*Damming the Flood* explains how the enemies of popular democracy in Haiti skillfully deployed media misrepresentation, "democracy promotion," economic coercion, and eventually military intervention to weaken and tarnish Haiti's progressive government, until it could be toppled easily, and without protest even

from the anti-war and anti-imperialist movements in North America and Europe.

*Damming the Flood* is well written and the story is compelling. It is meticulously researched, with ample citations to the mainstream press, human rights reports, and experts from many countries and political perspectives. *Damming the Flood* is the best source for anyone trying to understand what has happened in Haiti, and it is unfortunately equally valuable for explaining what is happening elsewhere in Latin America.

Peter Hallward is a philosophy professor at Middlesex University in England, and his writing on Haiti shows both his intellectual rigor, and his broader political commitment to taking the side of the oppressed throughout the world.

*Damming the Flood* will be available at bookstores in April, but a limited number of copies are available now from the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, [www.HaitiJustice.org](http://www.HaitiJustice.org).

*[The author is Director, Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, [Brian@ijdh.org](mailto:Brian@ijdh.org), [www.HaitiJustice.org](http://www.HaitiJustice.org).]*

*In Oaxaca, Mexico, protest encampments of striking teachers and members of the APPO, have largely disappeared from the streets following the police repressions of October and November 2007. It is not known what is on the horizon for the movement or for Oaxaca but Mexican organizations are working to further social and economic justice through the areas of trade, migration, land rights, human rights, indigenous rights and the crisis in the Mexican countryside brought about by international trade agreements such as NAFTA. Now, more than ever, international solidarity and activism are crucial to the future of both Mexico and the United States.*

*Photo: Joanne Ranney*



## El Salvador Twenty Years Later

- by Bill Hutchinson

During the war in El Salvador Herbert Anaya was President of the Human Rights Commission, documenting torture, disappearances, and killings and publishing his findings. In 1986 he was imprisoned - fifteen days of isolation and torture - with four other members of the Commission. The five interviewed 400 other political prisoners while in Mariona Prison. This resulted in the Commission's publication in 1987, *Torture in El Salvador*.

Herbert - the most outspoken, courageous, and respected voice of protest in the country - was assassinated in October of 1986. His widow, Mirna Perla, and their five children produce an annual Human Rights Congress with the cooperation of law students and faculty at the National University.

In 1991 the peace accords ended the war, the adversaries realigning themselves as the FMLN on the left and ARENA on the right. In 1994 ARENA gained the presidency and a slim majority in the Assembly - a pattern duplicated in every election since. In 2001 ARENA dollarized the Salvadoran economy. Since then prices for basic commodities have doubled while wages have remained stagnant or fallen.

The economic oligarchs have converted their holdings from the agricultural sector-thereby draining the countryside of its peasants-to banking and maquilas. This leaves the poor with three options: miserable low-pay jobs in the enterprise zones; escape to find work outside the country; or scratching by in the informal sector (e.g., changing tires in sidewalk shanties, chanting their way through the afternoon streets, vending coconuts or bread.)

Dollarization has also paved the way for foreign investment in franchised fast-food restaurants, car dealerships, real estate developments, and a vastly improved highway system. With this surge of economic activity the middle class has grown, and with it the need for accountants and lawyers; but it has grown away from the poor.

Neighborhood gangs of disaffected youth - initially an expression of solidarity and turf - have morphed into proper criminal enterprises under the leadership of gang members deported from Southern California. The Mara Salvatrucha and Mara 18 compete for dominance. They extract protection money from shopkeepers and bus drivers. In response death squad activity (including members of the police and armed forces) has resurfaced.

In the 2009 national elections the FMLN seems well-positioned. They already have anointed a presidential candidate, Mauricio Funes, a popular radio personality. ARENA's own house is currently and rancorously divided among no less than five factions.

Should Funes retain his lead, and with it the possibility of coat-tailing a FMLN majority into the Assembly, one hopes that the run-up to the elections will exhibit a characteristic of a civil society-freedom from violence.

*[The author is co-founder of the Task Force on Latin America, formerly Marin County Interfaith Task Force on Latin America.]*

**“We don’t have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when amplified by millions of people, can quietly become a power no government can suppress, a power that can transform the world.”**

**Howard Zinn (from “The Optimism of Uncertainty,” Independent Politics! Winter 2008)**

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## Imperialism 101: A book review

- by Malcolm Bell

A quarter of a century ago, longtime “New York Times” reporter Stephen Kinzer co-authored *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. Now he has written another forthright modern history, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from*

Hawaii to Iraq (Times Books 2006, paper 2007). Once again he gives the lie to the myth that our nation goes to war only as a last resort, only in a just cause, and only against someone who deserves it (the Hitler du jour).

*Overthrow* gives brief, balanced, highly informative accounts of fourteen instances in which the United States overthrew, or was deeply complicit in overthrowing, somebody else's government, using violence and/or fraud, sometimes killing many thousands of people, often installing and then supporting regimes that used torture and murder to maintain themselves, often advancing the interests of large US corporations, rarely advancing the cause of democracy.

Notably for readers of “Interconnect,” eight of the fourteen instances occurred in Latin America or the Caribbean. The fourteen are: Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Nicaragua, Iran, Honduras, Guatemala, Vietnam, Chile, Grenada, Panama, Afghanistan, and Iraq. I suspect that many readers are, like me, fairly familiar with some of these aggressions and not with others. All the accounts, though, are fascinating, and they gain impact from being presented in a bunch.

Nobody punishes the 800-pound gorilla except subsequent events. Sounding another theme of “bitter fruit,” Kinzer shows that time and again, an overthrow yielded short-term benefits, but later proved counterproductive if not disastrous.

The CIA's 1953 destruction of democracy in Iran, for example, benefited Texaco, Gulf, Standard Oil of New Jersey, and Mobil, but set the stage for much turmoil and hatred of America in the Middle East and even for 9/11.

Kinzer: “Almost every American overthrow of a foreign government has left in its wake a bitter residue of pain and anger.... Most American-sponsored 'regime change' operations have, in the end, weakened rather than strengthened American security.... In most cases, diplomatic and political approaches would have worked far more effectively.”

It has been common wisdom since Machiavelli that a mighty nation was safer being feared than loved. But those days ended on 9/11 when nineteen young men out of the multitude that US conduct has caused to hate us proved that some of them can hurt us. The more Americans who heed the lessons of *Overthrow*, the better.

## Reflections from Bolivia

-by Joanne Ranney



Standing on a rocky outcrop at 15,000 feet above sea level in the Bolivian Andes, I looked down on the small stone huts and saw a different rhythm to life. Here people live as shepherds, spending their days roaming the mountains with their sheep and llamas. They live their life as a mantra and appear untouched by the madness of the world. Yet they are not untouched. Natural gas pipelines run through their land. High tension power lines are strung over their heads while few homes have electricity. None benefit from natural gas or have safe water.

This is globalization in 2007.

The Huanuni Mines are the richest tin mines in the world and rising prices on the world market have fueled desires by both independent and state-employed miners to expand operations. When prices began rising in the 1990s, unemployed miners began working idle mines and formed cooperatives. Desperate for work, the unequal access to mines has pitted brother against brother and neighbor against neighbor in bloody conflict. While Bolivia struggles to regain control of her natural resources this woman's home has been destroyed.



I feel a troubling arrogance in the world. Economic and social dislocations are considered “inevitable” on the rough road to capital driven democracy.

Native people have lived organically with the land where all forms of life are respected but capitalization is destroying these sacred customs by using nature as a disposable commodity.

We must learn from history. We must evolve the wisdom to live life in balance. History cannot be un-lived.

[by Joanne Ranney, *Witness for Peace*, New England Regional Organizer]



Seattle student studies medicine free in Cuba. The Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee reports that Ramon Bernal, born in Mexico, came to the US as a pre-teen, attended a US high school and Seattle University. Lacking the funds for medical school, but determined to serve the poor, he qualified for Cuba's program of free tuition, room, board and books (IFCO/Pastors for Peace: ellenb@igc.org).

## From the Literature

**Guatemala:** From the November 16, 2007, newsletter of Randall Shea, a school administrator in rural Guatemala.) The recent election of Alvaro Colom as president in Guatemala is good news and a big relief. My personal sense is that he will keep the government focused to a much greater degree than recent past administrations on the needs of Guatemala's poor majority. While that may or may not turn out to be true, in any case he was running against a retired general, a School of the America's graduate who was once the head of the G-2 Military Intelligence branch. The G-2 was in charge of approving all assassinations and disappearances during the war years, and in carrying out torture in order to extract information or otherwise terrorize the general populace. If General Perez Molina had been elected, it would have been a tremendous step backwards for the country.

[Ed. note. On 1/4/08 President Colom, at his inauguration, promised to fight poverty but said he didn't want to be identified with other leftist governments in Latin America.]

**Trade:** (by Naomi Klein (The Nation 11/26/07). The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) is the continent's retort to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the now-buried corporatist dream of a free-trade zone stretching from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. Though ALBA is still in its early stages, Emir Sader, a Brazil-based sociologist, describes its promise as "a perfect example of genuinely fair trade: each country provides what it is best placed to produce, in return for what it most needs, independent of global market prices." So Bolivia provides gas at stable discounted prices; Venezuela offers heavily subsidized oil to poorer countries and shares expertise in developing reserves; and Cuba sends thousands of doctors to deliver free healthcare all over the continent, while training students from other countries at its medical schools.

This is a very different model from the kind of academic exchange that began at the U of Chicago in the mid '50s, when hundreds of Latin American students learned a single rigid ideology and were sent home to impose it with uniformity across the continent. The major benefit is that ALBA is essentially a barter system in which countries decide for themselves what any given commodity or service is worth rather than letting traders in New York, Chicago or London set the prices for them. That makes trade less vulnerable to the kind of sudden price fluctuations that have hurt Latin American economies before. Surrounded by turbulent finan-

cial waters, Latin America is creating a zone of relative economic calm and predictability, a feat presumed impossible in the globalization era.

**Venezuela and the Referendum (excerpt from the Venezuela Solidarity Network statement on the 12/2/07 vote):**

With a registered voter turn-out of about 55%, Venezuelan voters rejected two referendum questions asking for approval of a total of 69 amendments to their constitution by a margin of 1.5 percent.

Proposed changes included: a 36 hour work week, social security, elimination of discrimination in all forms; and a seven year presidential term without term limits.

With 11 national votes in the past nine years Hugo Chavez obviously does not have autocratic control or the amendments he supported would not have been voted down.

It is time for the US government to stop interfering in Venezuela's democracy and time for the US corporate media to stop aiding and abetting it.

(For the full statement go to [vencon@lists.mutualaid.org](mailto:vencon@lists.mutualaid.org).)

**Venezuela:** (from the blog on [www.inercomm.org](http://www.inercomm.org) by Olivia Gombri, Director, Venezuela Information Office, 11/24/07): Over the last month the CIA has funneled \$8 million into Venezuela through the USAID...Although the press in the US has presented student violence as originating in the pro-Chavez camp, actually the opposition has instigated most of the very few incidents that have occurred...

**Venezuela:** (from personal e-mail, 11/05/07): The Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela played at Disney Hall: 160 players age 12-26 selected from the nationwide music program called El Sistema which involves about 250,000 youngsters, many poor. The 26-year-old conductor, Gustavo Dudamel, becomes the LA Philharmonic's conductor next year.



## Witness For Peace Celebrates 25 years Building Bridges Of Hope

*International Delegations, Action and Celebration*

### Join the WFP Historic 25th Anniversary Delegation!

Nearly 25 years since the first Witness for Peace delegation arrived in Latin America many of the same problems grip the region - poverty, violence and inequality.

Join with long-time and new WFP activists in this historic anniversary delegation.

After eight days in country, return to Washington DC for a weekend of sharing what was learned; participate in workshops, skill-building, advocacy, lobby training and direct action.

-We will be more than 100 strong - June 12-23, 2008

### Join one of FIVE TEAMS to go to one of FIVE COUNTRIES!

- **Nicaragua** -25 years ago, Witness for Peace was born on a historic delegation to Jalapa. Relive that history and learn from Nicaraguans who continue to struggle for economic justice today.
- **Colombia** -Witness the strength of Colombian civil society resolved to end the violence plaguing their country and forge a new future.
- **Guatemala** -From 1990 until 2001, WFP maintained a permanent presence in Guatemala. Return with us as we demonstrate our ongoing solidarity with the Guatemalan people.
- **Mexico** -Stand with southern Mexicans facing the consequences of 13 years of failed trade policy, state repression of social movements, and massive emigration.
- **Venezuela** -Move beyond the rhetoric from Washington to experience the reality Venezuelans are living today.

### Participate in the National Grassroots Conference & Celebration!

On Saturday, June 21 the WFP National Grassroots Conference will bring activists from all over the US to Washington DC to examine the current state of the most critical issues facing Latin America today.

In addition to dynamic workshops on these issues, Witness for Peace will offer skill-building training.

### Celebrate 25 years

On Saturday evening, June 21, the WFP community will come together to celebrate the courage and vision of people throughout the hemisphere who built a movement of solidarity to transform lives and policies! Reconnect with old friends in the WFP community and embrace fresh perspectives as we launch our next 25 years of Building Bridges of Hope. Share art and music, dinner and fellowship.

On Monday morning, we will proclaim our message through lobbying and nonviolent direct action. Let your voice be heard on Capitol Hill on this 25th, Anniversary Advocacy Day!

For more information on delegations, please contact Ken Crowley, 202-547-6112; ken@witnessforpeace.org or <http://www.witnessforpeace.org/>

## RESOURCES

### Major Events

**March.** Time and place TBA. National trade conference in DC re future of NAFTA (Alliance for Responsible Trade. See article above).

**March 7-10.** Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Join us in Washington, DC. Education and advocacy for just policies in the Americas. Latin America Working Group. To register: [twheeler@lawg.org](mailto:twheeler@lawg.org).

**April 18-21.** Venezuela Symposium (Venezuela Solidarity Network. See article above).

**April 23-28.** Annual General Meeting, Amnesty International, Washington, DC. Lobby day 4/28.

### Campaigns

- See list in 10/07 INTERCONNECT ([www.interconn.org](http://www.interconn.org), click on "newsletter" or "archives").
- Boycott World Bank Bonds. Get churches, city councils, etc. to not buy these bonds (50 Years Is Enough: US network for global economic justice; [info@50years.org](mailto:info@50years.org), 202-463-2265).
- End the US Travel Ban to Cuba. (Witness for Peace. [Tanya@witnessforpeace.org](mailto:Tanya@witnessforpeace.org), 202-5447-6112).
- End Sweatshops. Spread the "Sweatshop Curriculum" to middle and high schools and community organizations (Campaign for Labor Rights, [www.clrlabor.org](http://www.clrlabor.org), 202-544-9355).
- Media Accuracy on Latin America. NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America). Forming a network of activists to find and correct media errors ([www.nacla.org](http://www.nacla.org), 646-613-1440).
- Debt cancellation/trade justice issues ([www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org)).
- Support the Jubilee Act! (Diana at [nicca@igc.org](mailto:nicca@igc.org)).

### Books

**Fidel Castro: My Life**, by Fidel Castro and Ignacio Remonet (2008, Scribner).

See excerpt, "Castro helps Chavez avert a coup," in *The Nation* (1/21/08): How Fidel telephoned to persuade Hugo Chavez, surrounded in the 2002 coup, not to resign; and then communicated all day to convince the world and Venezuelan friends and foes that Chavez had not resigned, that the coup could result in "a river of blood in Venezuela." **NAFTA From Below: Maquiladora workers, farmers and indigenous communities speak out on the impact of free trade in Mexico**, by Martha Ojeda and Rosemary Hennessy (2007, Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, \$25).

*My Daughter's Eyes and Other Stories*, by Annaez Baez (2007, Curbstone, info@curbstone.org, \$15). Winner of the 2007 Marmol Prize. 14 stories of Dominican women living in the Bronx, 1970's to the present.

**Mobilizing for Human Rights in Latin America**, by Edward Cleary (2007, Kumarian, www.kpbooks.com, \$24.95).

**Cancer in the Body Politic: Diagnosis and prescription for an America in decline**, by Peter Mott, M.D. (2006, EPICA, admin@epica.org. \$10).

#### Newsletter

**Signs of the Times in the Americas:** Perspectives on corporate globalization, the war, torture, immigration, Katrina and news from Latin America and the Caribbean. Contact EPICA, admin@epica.org, or browse an online copy at www.epica.org

#### Travel (see Codes below)

**Argentina:** 2/15-23 (GX, Uruguay too, fascism revisited); 8/08 (GX, building economic justice).

**Bolivia:** 6/08 (GX, privatization of life); 7/08 (GX, women and development).

**Border:** 4/08 (GX, health, labor, environment); 8/08 (GX, health, labor, environment).

**Brazil:** 8/3-27 (TFA, agrarian reform, education, urban development, youth, Rio, Salvador, Bahia).

**Colombia:** 3/5=15 (WP, flowers and food, free trade and sustainability);

3/22-30 (FOR, youth, arts and action); 5/14-27 (CPT, indigenous groups in Narino, the Awa, effects of armed conflict); 5/25-6/2 (WP, globalization and coffee, free trade and farmers); 6/12-20 (WP, civil society vs. violence); 7/16-29 (CPT, Bolivar, Kinross gold mining, San Lucas Mtns, armed conflict, human rights); 8/2-16 (FOR, human rights, peaceful resistance to the "other war").

**Costa Rica:** 6/08 (GX, ecotourism and sustainability).

**Cuba:** 2/08 (GX sustainable agriculture study tour); 2/08 (GX, health specialists study tour); 3/08 (GX, health specialists study tour); 4/08 (GX, architects and urban planners study tour); 6/08 (GX, health specialists study tour).

**Ecuador:** 4/08 (GX, social and environmental justice); 7/08 (GX, social and environmental justice).

**El Salvador:** 2/3-9 (CGE, micro-finance, history, culture, economics); 3/24-31 (human rights, Assassination of Romero, CISPES, 202-521-2510).

**Guatemala:** 3/12-22 (GATE, Holy Week); 4/19-27 (GX, Chicago Religious TF, history, violence, the martyrs, www.crln.org/event/girardi\_encuentro\_delegation); 4/26-5/3 (Rights Action / EPICA, Impunity, Impact of Mining on Indigenous Peoples and the Environment. info@rightsaction.org or EPICA, admin@epica.org); 5/08 (GX, fair trade vs free trade); 5/19-6/1 (CGE, environmental justice, sustainable development); 6/12-20 (WP, solidarity with the people).

**Mexico:** 3/08 (GX, Chiapas, tierra y libertad); 3/08 (WP, Oaxaca crisis and roots of migration); 3/6-13 (TFA, Guerrero with SIPAZ, indigenous villages, ecology, human rights. 530-892-0662; info@sipaz.org); 5/3-10 (CGE, Christian faith, poverty, immigration, trade); 5/21-31 (GATE, Chiapas); 6/08 (GX, Chiapas, tierra y libertad); 6/12-20 (WP Southern Mexico, trade, repression of social movements, migration); 7/12-20 (CGE, professional development: feminist pedagogies); 8/08 (GX, Chiapas, tierra y libertad); 8/08 (GX,

democracy and development); 8/08 (GX, Spanish language study).

**Nicaragua:** 5/24-6/1 (TFA, Sandinistas, Managua, Malagalpa, rural poverty); 6/12-20 (WP, history, economic justice); 6/14-22 (Managua, Esteli, Matagalpa, empowering communities, Wisconsin Coordinating Council, 608-257-7230, wccn@ccnica.org); 6/18-28 (WP, health care, education, sustainability); 7/08 (GX, fair trade, alternatives and neo-liberalism); 7/05 (WP, teen delegation).

**Uruguay:** 2/15-23 (TFA, Uruguay and Argentina, fascism revisited, Andres 202-244-0951; enlofamerica@nvith.net).

**Venezuela:** 3/1-11 (GX, women's rights development, the Women's Bank); 3/9-19 (WP, healthcare and public policy); 3/21-30 (TFA, 7th year of Bolivarian Revolution, history, politics, economics, music, Task Force on the Americas and SOA Watch, Caracas, Barquisimeto, Sanare); 4/08 (GX, democracy and development); 4/4/14 (GATE); 5/08 (GX, community organizing); 5/08 (GX, Spanish language study); 6/08 (GX, Afro-Venezuelan culture); 7/08 (GX, Spanish language study); 7/08 (GX, community organizing, Bolivarian Revolution); 6/12-20 (WP, the reality of current Venezuela).

#### CODES:

**CGE:** Center for Global Education, Augsburg College. 612-330-1159; globaled@augsburg.edu.

**CPT:** Christian Peacemaker Teams. 773-277-0253 or www.cpt.org.  
**FOR:** Fellowship of Reconciliation, liza@igc.org.

**GATE:** Global Awareness Through Experience. 608-791-5283 or www.gate-travel.org.

**GX:** Global Exchange. 800-497-1994, x242, latinamerica@globalexchange.org; www.globalexchange.org.

**TFA:** Task Force on the Americas, 415-924-3227.

**WP:** Witness for Peace. 202-547-6112, www.witnessforpeace.org.

## Movement News in Brief

**Ecuador:** Rafael Correa, the country's leftist president, has pronounced that he will renew the lease for the US military base in Manta "on one condition: that they let us put a base in Miami - an Ecuadoran base." (Naomi Klein, The Nation, 11/26/07).

**Mexico:**

1. During the last seven years of PAN rule 73 journalists have been killed or disappeared.
2. In the last 16 years Mexicans working to preserve forests have been in danger. Thirty state forest inspectors have been assassinated in the State of Mexico (Newsletter of Peter Hinde, O.Carm).
3. There are 56 permanent military bases on indigenous land in Chiapas with increasing men and weapons as the low intensity war against Mayans and Zapatistas escalates (The Nation, 1/7/08).

**Haiti:** 600,000 Haitians live in neighboring Dominican Republic, working in sugar cane fields, living in conditions of modern slavery. Only 5-6000 have proper legal status. Bosses call the police to deport many so they don't have to pay them (International Organization for Migration, Geneva, as reported in Signs of the Times 9/07).

**Immigration:** Over 50 jurisdictions (including San Francisco, Los Angeles and Cambridge MA) in the US have declared themselves 'sanctuary cities' or "cities of refuge," ordering their employees not to cooperate with the feds in enforcing immigration laws. Stanford has "no hassle zones." Detroit has an anti-profiting ordinance. Eight states (Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, S. Carolina, Montana, Idaho, Nevada) have called for a repeal of the federal Real ID Act of 2005 which, starting 5/08, imposes stringent verification requirements for drivers' licenses and other state ID's (The Nation, 1/7/08).

**Latin America:** There are concerns about an "arms race" in the region but reasons for arming differ by country: In Chile, apparently a routine military purchase; in Venezuela, fear of a US attack; in Brazil, because their arms are obsolete or because Venezuela is arming; in Colombia, the US Plan Colombia; in Ecuador, because Colombia is arming. (Christian Science Monitor 1/16/08).

**Venezuela/Colombia:** On 1/9/08 two of the three Colombian hostages were released by the FARC guerillas after months of negotiation by President Chavez (Christian Science Monitor, 1/11/08).

**Paraguay:** Fernando Lugo, a liberation theologian and bishop (who has tendered his resignation but is still on the books) is favored to win the presidency in next year's election (National Catholic Reporter, 11/23/07).

**Indigenous Peoples:** Capping more than 20 years of debate, on 9/07 the UN passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, with 143 nations in favor, 11 abstentions, and 4 against - including the US.

**Gandhi spoke of two parts to a strategy for change - resisting what's not working and creating the new.**

**Sarah Van Gelder, Editor Yes! magazine, summer '99. Positive Futures Network, PO Box 10818, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110**