

## At A Crossroads In Latin America and with US relations

Nine key elections in 2006. • Will the US invade Venezuela?. • What about Bolivia?.

- UN (US, Canada, France, Brazil) massacres in Haiti?.
- US militarization increasing - and US police training in the ILEA...
- LASC organizing on the move - but so are the FBI, Pentagon, and NSA..
- 19,000 at the SOA: tipping point?

## Come to Washington March 4-6: US Hands Off Venezuela

- by Chuck Kaufman

A broad range of faith-based, Latin America solidarity, labor, and human rights groups is organizing a Venezuela Solidarity Conference March 4-6, 2006, in Washington, DC. The conference will include plenaries and workshops, some of which will educate US residents about advances of the Bolivarian movement on behalf of the Venezuelan people, and others which will plan how we in the US can oppose US government intervention in the sovereign affairs of Venezuela. Organizers expect that the conference will found a national Venezuela Solidarity Network just as past conferences have founded solidarity networks with Central America, Mexico, and Colombia.

Important members of the Venezuelan government and civil society as well as US Members of Congress and civil rights and labor leaders will speak at the conference, in addition to the many grassroots organizers who will be giving workshops on a broad range of topics.

The conference will last two days and will be followed by a Lobby Day on Monday for those who can stay in Washington to meet with their elected officials.

Registration is \$10-\$25, with a sliding scale for individuals; and organizations may co-sponsor for between \$50-\$200 - depending on size and staffing. Individuals can be listed in various supporting categories for tax deductible contributions of \$100 and up. Registration and additional information is available on the Latin America Solidarity Coalition website: [www.lasolidarity.org](http://www.lasolidarity.org). For more information email [Nicanet@afgj.org](mailto:Nicanet@afgj.org). Registrations, endorsements, and contributions should be mailed to: Venezuela Solidarity Conference, Alliance for Global Justice, 1247 E St., SE, Washington, DC 20003.

*(The author is national co-coordinator of the Nicaragua Network.)*

## Toward Victories in 2006:

### What your solidarity group can do to build the movement

1. Join the Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC)
  - a. See our website ([www.lasolidarity.org](http://www.lasolidarity.org)) to check your eligibility.
  - b. Add a paragraph description of your group to the Directory (send to Hendrik at SOA Watch, [hvoss@mutualaid.org](mailto:hvoss@mutualaid.org)).
2. Start using the LASC listserv, [lasolidarity-subscribe@lists.mutualaid.org](mailto:lasolidarity-subscribe@lists.mutualaid.org).
3. Share ideas, problems, resources through the listserv or this newsletter.

Refer this newsletter to other groups in solidarity with the people of Latin America. It's free by e-mail or mailed hard copy. They should send name, organization, street and e-mail addresses to us at [interconnect\\_mott@frontiernet.net](mailto:interconnect_mott@frontiernet.net).

## Electronic Interconnect?

Results are in: The overwhelming majority who responded to the postcard we sent out in August prefer to receive INTERCONNECT electronically. For the fervent minority opting for the paper copy we will continue to mail quarterly newsletters. If you haven't already registered your preference now is the time! While we're getting the website ready please send your e-address to [interconnect\\_mott@frontiernet.net](mailto:interconnect_mott@frontiernet.net) to receive the e-version. We welcome your ideas and concerns. As you know, our goal is to bring us together in common cause to be effective and unified in our work. Thank you!

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**Guest Editorial: Listen to America**

- excerpted from the Nov/Dec 05 issue of *NACLA Report on the Americas* by Teo Ballve

Latin America seems eerily calm lately...Rarely, though, are things what they seem in this region, this home of 'magical realism'...a careful listener will hear the marching boot-slaps of change growing louder and louder. That's the sound of 2006 - another watershed year...so it would behoove us to listen and...begin with those who are rightly considered expert listeners: The Zapatistas. After 22 years of sloshing through the Mexican jungles of Chiapas, and after several marathon plenary sessions this summer, Subcommandante Marcos will venture out - unarmed - on New Year's Day...for "the Other Campaign?" To do what? Well, to listen, of course. After the July presidential elections, other Zapatistas will spread out across Mexico to, in Marcos' words, "shake up this country from below, lift it, and turn it on its head."

Meanwhile, Bolivia, Chile and Haiti are scheduled to end 2005 with presidential elections, followed next year by...Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

Similarly, in Nicaragua and El Salvador, the FSLN and FMLN are fending off crises of their own, resulting in mass defections to competing party offshoots...for upcoming elections...

If there's one commonality between all these developments, then it's the impossibility of predicting their outcome. It's a familiar feeling: Latin America always seems on the verge of something historic, always teetering between possibility and failure.

*(The author is the new Editor of NACLA "Report on the Americas," www.nacla.org).*

You know, it's very interesting that the choices that are opposed are always between centralized controlling states and centralized controlling market. There's never room left for decentralized democracy for communities. And my options are beyond centralized states and beyond the centralized markets. They are about communities making decisions about how the rivers will function, how the forests will be protected, what food they will grow.

*Vandana Shiva, from PBS NOW with Bill Moyers  
[http://www.pbc.org//now/transcript/transcript\\_shiva.html](http://www.pbc.org//now/transcript/transcript_shiva.html)*



Photo by Grace Braley with caption: Madres de Plaza Cinco de Mayo, Argentina. Sign reads: Don't Pay The Foreign Debt.

## Bolivia: Not For Sale

-By Benjamin Dangl

After winning a landslide election victory on December 18th, Bolivian president-elect Evo Morales joined the growing ranks of left-of-center leaders in Latin America. Instead of pandering to Washington and corporate investors, as his predecessors have done, Morales has pledged to reshape Bolivian politics and economics to benefit the people. Bolivian social movements have promised to hold his administration's feet to flame, to ensure Morales follows through on campaign promises.

The social movements demand that Morales fully nationalize the gas reserves, which are the second largest in Latin America, and organize a popular assembly to rewrite the constitution. Their hope is that the profit from the sale of gas would be directed into social programs in education, health care and land reform - similar to what has taken place in Venezuela.

Holding an assembly to rewrite the constitution could create the opportunity for a powerful collaboration between the government and the social movements. In early December 2005, social movements formed a coalition aimed at rejecting any US-backed free trade agreement and transforming the management of basic services such as water, gas and electricity to support the country's marginalized citizens.

Meanwhile, US troops stationed in neighboring Paraguay could be poised to intervene if the Andean country sways too far from Washington's interests. An airbase in Mariscal Estigarribia, Paraguay, 200 kilometers from the border with Bolivia, is reportedly utilized by hundreds of US troops. Analysts in the region believe these troops also could be poised to suppress leftist movements and secure the country's gas reserves.

The US Embassy in Paraguay contends that no plans for a military outpost exist and that the operations are based on humanitarian efforts. However, State Department reports do not mention any funding for humanitarian work in Paraguay. They do mention that funding for the Counterterrorism Fellowship Program in the country doubled in 2005. US officials say the triple border area,

where Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil meet, is a base for Islamic terrorist networks.

"I wouldn't dismiss the hypothesis that US agents plant stories in the media about Arab terrorists in the Triple Frontier to...justify their military presence," explained Luiz Moniz Bandeira, a Brazilian foreign affairs analyst.

Orlando Castillo, a Paraguayan human rights leader, said the goal of US military operations in his country is to secure natural resources in the area, "debilitate the southern bloc...and destabilize the region's governments, especially Evo Morales'..."

*(The author is editor of [www.UpsideDownWorld.org](http://www.UpsideDownWorld.org), a website uncovering activism and politics in Latin America. He's working on a book about Bolivian social movements and politics which will be published by AK Press in January, 2007.)*

[Ed. note: Since his election Morales has visited Cuba, Venezuela, China and Brazil to discuss supplying natural gas. He also has urged the US to close all military bases in Latin America.]

## 2006: The Year that We'll Close the School of the Americas!

- by Christy Pardew and Hendrik Voss, SOA Watch staff

This year's Vigil at the gates of Fort Benning, Georgia, was the largest gathering to date. It fueled people's commitment and energized thousands from across the Americas. Now, we need to keep up the pressure to change oppressive US foreign policy, to shut down the SOA and the racist system of violence and repression that it represents.

We need every one of us to step up the campaign to close the SOA in our own communities -- we must bring the Vigil to our families, to our churches, to our campuses, to our union halls, to our schools and to the doors of our Congressional representatives.

The SOA (renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation or WHINSEC) has trained thousands of South and Central American troops in counter-insurgency and terrorist techniques that are used against civilians in their own countries. The SOA/WHINSEC is a key tool in the oppressive US foreign policy towards Latin America, a foreign policy that relies on military violence, repression and racism in order to secure U.S. domination.

The movement to close the SOA, made up of people from many backgrounds, represents a positive and fundamentally different alternative to the system of violence and oppression.



## An Eloquent Call to End Torture

Last September 24, a Saturday, more than 500 people gathered in Washington's New York Avenue Presbyterian Church for a "Call for Justice Weekend" that was presented by an interfaith coalition organized by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's STOP (Stop Torture Permanently) Campaign. During the conference, survivors of torture and other knowledgeable speakers provided information, ideas, and inspiration aimed at ending US participation in that abominable and counterproductive practice. Optional workshops were held that afternoon to allow for the many attendees who went off to march in that day's magnificent (300,000 +/- people) anti-war demonstration.

Sunday, the 25th, featured a mock trial of Donald Rumsfeld, George Tenet, and Alberto Gonzales for the crimes of torture and conspiracy to torture. While the trial itself was "mock," it employed real statutes, real lawyers, and actual statements of detainees, survivors, and the defendants themselves. After about six hours of testimony, the jury (the audience) convicted all defendants on all counts. What struck me most was how realistic and just it would be for these men to be prosecuted for these crimes, if only their partners in crime had not been chosen by 51% of the voters to lead the country (if that election were honest).

Attendees who stayed through Monday, the 26th, lobbied their Senators and Representatives against torture. It's sad that such lobbying is necessary. One of

In April people will converge on Washington for three days of training and lobbying. With a vote on the SOA coming to the floor of the House as early as May of this year, your voice is needed. Join many others working to change US foreign policy towards Latin America on April 23-25. Sunday will be devoted to trainings, discussions, panels, music and more. On Monday and Tuesday we'll flood the halls of Congress!

For more information, visit [www.SOAW.org](http://www.SOAW.org), or call 202-234-3440.

[Ed. note: SOA Watch plans visits to Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Bolivia to ask them to stop sending troops to the SOA.]



At the anti-war protest in Washington, Sept. 27. Photos by Orin Langelle, Global Justice Ecology Project, Hinesburg, VT

Saturday's topics was "Where Is the Outrage?" There obviously isn't much outrage in Congress; or else Bush and Cheney would be subject to impeachment for torture, and the Senate would not have confirmed one of its architects, Gonzales, as our chief law enforcement officer.

Jennifer Harbury, whose husband was tortured and murdered more than a decade ago by Guatemalan army officers working with the CIA, was the main organizer of the program and wrote the trial. Her new book, *Truth, Torture, and the American Way* (Beacon Press, 2005), came out just in time for the weekend; it is expected to be reviewed in the next Interconnect. More information, including the 81-page trial transcript, is posted at [www.uusc.org/stoptorture](http://www.uusc.org/stoptorture); a DVD of the trial may be ordered. - M. B.

## Haiti: More Crises

- by Brian Concannon

Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, "Fr. Gerry," is Haiti's most prominent dissident and most prominent cancer patient. As of the deadline for this issue, the charismatic Catholic priest has spent almost six months in prison, despite a complete absence of proof of any wrongdoing, and despite a diagnosis of leukemia that doctors say is treatable - but not in a Haitian prison. For an update on Fr. Gerry's situation, and what you can do about it, see [www.ijdh.org](http://www.ijdh.org) (click on "The Persecution of Fr. Jean-Juste").

A huge mobilization has built up in support of justice for Fr. Gerry. Amnesty International, Human Rights First, the American Friends Service Committee, Global Exchange, the UN Human Rights Commission, 45 members of the US Congress, and hundreds of religious and solidarity leaders have called for his release. Regardless of whether Fr. Gerry is released soon, this mobilization has several useful lessons:

**Pressure against the US works:** As with many of our Southern neighbors with high levels of political persecution, the US provides the Interim Haitian Government (IGH) generous amounts of money, guns and diplomatic protection. The US had, for five months, declined to pressure its friends in Haiti to free Fr. Gerry, claiming that the Haitian justice system needed time to work and that Fr. Gerry received adequate healthcare in prison. Both explanations are unjustified - Haiti's corrupt and politicized justice system would be content to hold Fr. Jean-Juste indefinitely, and the State Department's website warns that healthcare in Haiti is "scarce and substandard." But faced with mounting pressure and the urgency of the leukemia diagnosis, the US Embassy helped arrange an independent medical exam to confirm the diagnosis, and recently began pressuring the IGH to let Fr. Gerry go.

**Outreach works:** Solidarity for victims of human rights in Haiti has been building gradually since the February 2004 US kidnapping of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's Constitutional President. The movement has been hampered by "progressives" who were reluctant to critique US imperialism in Haiti because they disliked the ousted elected regime (a standard not applied to Iraq's ousted dictatorship). But a large mobilization has been built for Fr. Gerry by persistence - 5 months of action alerts, demonstrations and information dissemination by several organizations - and by reaching out to new communities. Doctors concerned about leukemia, religious groups concerned about religious persecution, and refugee advocates (Fr. Gerry directed Miami's Haitian refugee center for 10 years) jumped on the bandwagon for their own reasons, as did mainstream human rights groups and members of Congress from both parties who were compelled to act by the obvious persecution.

The mobilization for Fr. Gerry will have an impact far beyond his case. When he is freed, the infamy of his persecution will provide a podium for him to speak for the political prisoners he will have left behind in jail. Fr. Gerry's charisma and high profile attracted people to the movement who will continue to fight for Haiti's less prominent, but equally persecuted activists.

*(The author, a human rights lawyer, directs the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, [www.ijdh.org](http://www.ijdh.org).)*

## LASC Coordinating Committee Actions in 2005

1. Working Group on the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). In July 2006 LASC attempted to end NED funding through the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center. That Center supports Sumate in Venezuela. Sumate assisted the attempted coup and the recall referendum against the elected government. LASC sent more than 5000 letters to labor leaders to back a resolution at the Chicago AFL-CIO convention. LASC held a peaceful demo in Chicago, educating hundreds of attendees (status: not won yet). To join, contact **James Jordan**, Turnwind at [jjp@mutualaid.org](mailto:jjp@mutualaid.org) or 520-991-4109.

2. Working Group on the International Tribunal on Haiti. A mock court proceeding was held in DC last September, with judge, jury, and detailed evidence revealed by many witnesses, against the UN, the US, and a Brazilian commander for the July 6, 05 massacre by UN "peacekeeping" troops. Twenty-seven civilians - including women and children in their beds - were killed by 300 UN troops at 3 AM in Cite de Soleil, the poorest part of Port au Prince. All evidence is being turned over to the International Criminal Court in the Hague. The victims were supporters of ousted President Aristide's Lavalas party.

3. Working Group to plan the Venezuela Conference (see p. 1). Those able to help the planning committees (outreach, logistics, workshops, and plenaries) please contact **Chuck Kaufman**, Nicaragua Network, [chuck@afgj.org](mailto:chuck@afgj.org) or 202-544-9355.

4. Working Group on Visas. Now forming. Those able to help stop current US restrictions on speakers coming from Latin America please contact **Burke Stansbury**, CISPES, [burke@cispes.org](mailto:burke@cispes.org) or 212-465-8115.

Contact Peter at [interconnect\\_mott@frontiernet.net](mailto:interconnect_mott@frontiernet.net) for how your group can join the LASC Coordinating Committee.

## From the Literature

### Domestic Spying in the US

#### 1. Pentagon

- Lisa Myers, Douglas Pasternak, and Rick Gardella of MSNBC reported 12/13/05 that NBC News obtained a secret 400-page Defense Department (DOD) document with 1500 “suspicious incidents” in a recent ten-month period, including names and vehicle descriptions of US citizens at peaceful anti-war meetings and protests, counter-military recruitment sites, and a military air and sea show. Also reports of internet communication between protest groups. For two years a DOD agency, Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA) has established a major data base of “planned anti-war protests. CIFA since 3/04 has awarded \$33 million in contracts to defense corporations to develop databases that comb through classified and unclassified government data, commercial information, and internet chatter to help sniff out terrorists, saboteurs and spies,” and “people of interest.” ([www.truthout.org/docs\\_2005/1214052.shtml](http://www.truthout.org/docs_2005/1214052.shtml))
- The Pentagon's \$300 million psychological warfare operation includes “placing pro-American messages in foreign media outlets worldwide, including in allied nations” (USA Today, 12/14/05). One private contractor is the Rendon Group (\$56 million since 9/11/01). One of their tasks was to create a grassroots voting effort in Puerto Rico on behalf of the Navy, preceding the closing of the Navy bombing range on Vieques Island ([www.chicagotribune.com/business/chi-0511130330nov13,1,2426826.story?ctrack=1&cset=true](http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/chi-0511130330nov13,1,2426826.story?ctrack=1&cset=true))

#### 2. National Security Agency

- In 2002 a secret Bush order authorized the NSA to spy on US citizens and foreign nationals in the US (Washington Post 12/16/05).

#### 3. FBI

- The FBI is authorized to “watch activist groups” (NY Times 12/20/05).
- An independence leader in Puerto Rico, and 1967 founder of the Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement, Filiberto Ojeda Rios, was murdered at his underground home there on 9/23/05, allegedly by the FBI. He was wanted by the FBI for a possible role in a 1968 bank heist ([www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=05/09/26/1434229](http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=05/09/26/1434229)). [Ed. note: This reminds one of the 1960's-70's FBI actions against the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, the Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador, etc. See the COINTELPRO Papers, Churchill and VanderWall, 1990, South End Press.]
- The Fellowship of Reconciliation urges “US officials to heed calls from across Puerto Rico's political spectrum to investigate the FBI's use of violence against Ojeda Rios. The FOR re-commits itself to work with communities in PR and the US to ensure that the people of PR may be free from the chains of oppression that colonialism hangs over the island” ([www.forusa.org](http://www.forusa.org)). All political parties in PR have condemned the FBI.

#### 4. Police

- New York City: undercover police officers were seen infiltrating seven anti-war gatherings in 2004-5 on videos given to the NY Times by a police forensic video analyst. Federal restrictions on such police work have been relaxed (NY Times 12/22/05).

### Brazil

The Workers' Party (PT) of President Lula has disappointed followers by Lula's written assurances that neoliberal economic policies would not change, by financial pay-offs to congressional representatives of other parties (although none to PT leaders, and by the lack of programs for the poor, Lula's opposition to raising the minimum wage, and reduction of Social Security benefits (NACLA Nov-Dec 05 by Thomas Maack).

### Cuba

In the fall of 2005 the United Nations voted 182 to 4 for unconditional lifting of the US embargo. On 10/16/05 the annual Ibero American Summit in Spain demanded an end to the US “blockade.”

US Secretary of State Rice appointed Caleb McCarry, a Republican party activist, to a new post of “Cuba transition coordinator.” Rice stated the US is working with advocates of democratic change on the island to force “the Castro regime...to broadcast the truth about its deplorable treatment of the Cuban people.” (CUSLAR, Fall '05, and the BBC newswire 7/28/05).

Cuba's “Operation Miracle” has performed eye surgery on 208,000 patients from 21 countries since 2004 (AIN-NEWS 5). On 8/2/05 Havana's Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) graduated 1510 new MD's from poor families in 28 countries, including the first US citizen, Cedric Edwards of Slidell, LA . All attended school free of charge. (IFCO/Pastors for Peace).

In 2005 a working group of the UN Human Rights Commission declared the detention of the Cuban Five arbitrary and illegal. They have been prisoners in the US for seven years, apparently for spying on anti-Fidel Castro Cuban-Americans in Florida. Also, on 8/9/05 three judges in Atlanta overturned their convictions and ordered a new trial outside Miami (AINNEWS 3 and editor@ain.cu).

**Faithful Community, Faithful Author**

A book review by Malcolm Bell

Have you ever wondered about day-to-day life in a Christian base community? *Faithful Community: Campesino Vision of the Kingdom of God: History of the Christian Base Community in Jinocua, Nicaragua* (EPICA, 2005) gives the 33-year history of a CCB (*comunidad cristiana de base*) in a village in northern Nicaragua, along with a concurrent history of that much-abused nation. It is a story of community and spiritual growth in the face of daunting obstacles. During the last fourteen of those years, the author, Philip E. Wheaton, served as a friend and witness for this CCB and a bridge between it and the ecumenical congregation where he is co-pastor, in Washington, DC.

The community in Jinocua began under the Somoza regime. With the Sandinista victory in 1979, the people remained poor, but no longer in fear - except from Reagan's Contras, who killed 15 civilians in that little village. Then Sandinismo declined, and a corrupt and indifferent government dedicated to neoliberal policies and U.S. interests took over. Assailed by the Catholic hierarchy, many CCBs folded; those that carried on endured "systematic exclusion from access to the sacraments." In addition, the Jinocua CCB was beset by drought, alcoholism, personality clashes, divisions in the community, worsening poverty, and, in 1998, the devastation of Hurricane Mitch.

The key to this CCB's survival has been its people. We meet a good number who are spiritual, generous, creative, resourceful, honest, patient, and persistent, as well as a few who are difficult. For the most part, they seek to follow Jesus and look out for one another. They open a small hotel. They open and reopen and reopen a bakery. Women take leadership roles. "What astounded me most about Jinocua," Rev. Wheaton says, "is that this grassroots catholic community has remained faithful to the Gospel despite being castigated and rejected by the catholic hierarchy simply because of the community's refusal to disavow its Sandinista loyalty and to 'submit' to the clergy."

A question that arose some years ago and no one seems to have answered with broad success: How can we have CCBs here? While *Faithful Community* does not offer specific answers, it provides hints, examples, and much inspiration for anyone who cares to try. This community, Rev. Wheaton says, "caught a vision of building the Kingdom of God on earth." He calls his years with them "the most fulfilling experience of my life."

## Special Delegation to Colombia

### ***"Building a Culture of Peace"***

- Join Global Exchange and the Fellowship of Reconciliation Feb. 12-24.
- Celebrate the 1st anniversary of the relocation of San Jose de Apartado
- Celebrate the 40 such international peace communities
- Support the grieving for Luis Eduardo Guerra
- Join the people in saying NO to armed conflict after 40 years
- Learn about the US "Plan Colombia," the drug war, the economy.

Contact zach@globalexchange.org or 1-800-497-1994 x226.

For the past century, US domination over Latin America has been a multifaceted process with military, economic, technological, financial, cultural and intellectual dimensions. Depending on the historical moment, the US has employed particular aspects of this power through a mutually reinforcing pattern of persuasion and coercion. The informal US Empire has shaped its rhetoric regarding its mission in the world to justify this contradictory array of generosity and extortion, benevolence and violence, justice and paternalism.

*Ricardo D. Salvatore, professor at Universidad Torcuato di Tella, Buenos Aires, as quoted from NACLA, 9-10/05*

# Bush Administration Using Implementation of CAFTA Agreement to Further Expand Corporate Rights in Central America

-by Burke Stansbury(CISPES) and Tom Ricker(Quixote Center)

January 1, 2006 marked the date that the Bush Administration had set for implementation of the US-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (otherwise known as CAFTA). The United States Trade Representative continues to insist on dramatic changes to constitutional laws in the six countries involved in the agreement, causing the deadline failure. As if the agreement itself weren't bad enough for the region- CAFTA will hurt small farmers, worsen workers rights, and lead to environmental degradation - the US is manipulating the implementation process to demand even further concessions by the six countries involved.

Such steps prove that the implementation process - like the negotiations and the ratification of CAFTA - is undemocratic, lacks transparency, and demonstrates the manner by which CAFTA serves only multinational corporate interests. CAFTA approval in the US Congress is cited by the Bush Administration as one of its few legislative successes of 2005, despite the fact that the 2 vote margin was the closest ever for such an agreement. In fact, the flawed implementation process lumps CAFTA in a series of Administration failures on trade which include stalled negotiations towards the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the Doha round of the WTO.

One country has achieved the necessary reforms necessary for implementation: El Salvador. But much like the turbulent ratification of the agreement - which occurred at 3:00 in the morning in an assembly surrounded by riot police - the process has been fraught with problems. In December the National Assembly rammed through 14 constitutional changes without any substantial debate, leading to the eruption of massive protests by informal sector market vendors a few weeks later. The reforms will impose fines and even jail time for those who sell and purchase pirated goods, thereby destroying the livelihood of many poor Salvadorans who depend on the informal economy. The Salvadoran executive introduced the CAFTA reforms just two days prior to the vote, prompting legislators from the largest opposition party (FMLN) to abstain from the vote and walk out of the Assembly session.

The Bush administration continues to demand that intellectual property rights protections be tightened in the other CAFTA countries before they can be certified to join the agreement. The U.S. government is criticizing Guatemala's pending intellectual property law for not being strict enough, thereby using CAFTA implementation to tighten restrictions on drug patents - benefiting pharmaceutical corporations but certainly not poor people in need of affordable drugs. It's no wonder that in Guatemala 20,000 protestors demonstrated against the Assembly's vote in favor of CAFTA last March.

Perhaps more embarrassing for the Bush Administration is that Costa Rica, the country representing the largest economy in the region, has yet to vote on CAFTA. Opposition has been fierce and is growing stronger, and the parliament there will likely not debate the agreement until after the presidential elections in February of 2006. In another example of the US's role in thrusting "free" trade on poor countries, the new US ambassador in Costa Rica recently criticized that country for not having moved forward on CAFTA, and threatened that it could lose its textile

export benefits under the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) if it fails to approve the trade deal.

Organizations from throughout Central America recently met in Costa Rica for the 6th Mesoamerican Forum where they pledged to continue fighting CAFTA's worst aspects by monitoring the effects of the agreement and mobilizing in the streets. In the US, the Stop CAFTA Coalition has organized coordinated, local anti-CAFTA actions in January to denounce the likely effects of the agreement in Central America and to hold accountable Representatives and Senators who voted in favor of CAFTA last July. The actions will also highlight the injustice inherent in the CAFTA implementation process, and celebrate the continued resistance in Central America to "free" trade, privatization, and US economic domination.

**As architects of the global economy, the World Bank and the IMF have enormous power to shape the conditions of people's lives around the world. That power has been used to create a global economy friendly to the interests of the wealthy and multinational corporations, but devastating to the lives of hundreds of millions of impoverished people.**

*50 Years Is Enough.  
Sept 2005 letter.*

## From The Literature

### Venezuela

- More people in Venezuela consider their country “totally democratic” than any other nation in Latin America, according to Chilean firm Latinofareto after face-to-face interviews with 20,000 people in 18 nations (www.veninfo.org/newes/latbar2005).
- Venezuela withdrew diplomatic immunity from US Drug Enforcement Administration agents after the US cancelled visas of six Venezuelan National guard officers (latinamerica press, 8/24/05).
- President Chavez, stating that 5% of landowners own 80% of the land, has ordered land takeover from foreign corporations (e.g. an idle Heinz ketchup plant - with compensation; cattle land of British meat producer Vestey) for distribution to poor families,. Christian Science Monitor, 11/1/05).
- In the 12/4/05 parliamentary elections, boycotted by opposition parties, Chavez-allied parties won all 167 seats. The Office of American States Observer Mission, and General Secretary Jose Miguel Insulza, stated there was “nothing abnormal’ in the election, and that “if the path of abstention is chosen, then one cannot complain...” (Venezuelanalysis.com, 12/26/05).
- Heating oil at 40% discount is flowing from Venezuela via CITGO, the US subsidiary of Venezuela's national oil company, to 1250 NGO-identified poor families in the South Bronx (NY Daily News 12/6, Newsweek 12/19/05). Also to Boston, four Native American tribes and 40 homeless shelters in Maine, and 48,000 Maine residents enrolled in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, (Portland Press Herald, 1/11/06).

## Book Note:

### Losing Moses, Finding Reality

**L**osing Moses on the Freeway: *The 10 Commandments in America* (Free Press, 2005) by Chris Hedges says little that applies to the Latin America solidarity community until the point that he is invited, on the strength of his 2002 book, *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* (reviewed in the April 2003 *Interconnect*), to speak at the Rockford College (Illinois) commencement in May 2003. This was shortly after Bush claimed "Mission Accomplished!" and, Hedges writes, "the crowd, indeed much of the country, was not ready for a denunciation of the Iraqi war." Nonetheless, Hedges, who speaks Arabic and knows Iraq, denounces the war and predicts that the occupation will become very violent. The audience intersperses objections, insults, and disruptions. Afterwards Rush Limbaugh, Fox News, and the *Wall Street Journal* assail Hedges; his then employer, the *New York Times*, sends him a letter of reprimand. (Its Aug. 21, 2005, *Book Review* dismisses his present book in a snotty, obtuse paragraph.)

Hedges was right, of course, and paid the price. The episode presents a priceless paradigm of the disconnect between reality and the bubble that much of the US public floats in - a disconnect that challenges solidarity activists daily. Let us take heart from Hedges' example. -- M. B.

## Book Note:

### Uncle Sam's Impunity at Risk

**S**hortly after 9/11, the *Wall Street Journal* turned loose its Ukrainian-born, Arabic-speaking reporter Yaroslav Trofimov for three years "to explore the Muslim world's reaction to America's tragedy." His resulting book, *Faith at War: A Journey on the Frontlines of Islam, from Baghdad to Timbuktu* (Henry Holt, 2005), gives a fascinating, eye-opening, and ominous account of a myriad of Muslims' attitudes in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Yemen, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Mali, and Bosnia. He finds the so-called war on terrorism "mutating into an intractable, almost apocalyptic conflict between the West and Islam." He does not mention, but we may recognize, the commonalities of US imperialism that long went unpunished in Latin America and (until Pearl Harbor) the Pacific, and is now proceeding with greater ignorance, blunders, and likelihood of major pay-back than ever.

Excellent in the same vein is *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War* (Henry Holt, 2005) by Arabic-speaking, Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* reporter Anthony Shadid. Too bad Bush won't read either book. -- M. B.

## Thank You!

### For your generous contributions:

Arizona . . . . . Marge Leach  
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 . . . . . John Hammond  
 . . . . . Barbara and Hugh Outterson  
 . . . . . Alice Siegfried  
 Washington . . . . . Peter Bohmer  
 West Virginia . . . . .  
 . . . . . Daniel Dayle and Linda Stein

## Resources

### Major Events

- Jan-June: Mexico.** Sub-commandante Marcos visits all states.
- Feb.** Costa Rica. Election.
- Mar. 4-5. DC.** Venezuela Solidarity Conference (see p.1).
- Mar. 16.** Mexico City. 4th World Water Forum.
- Mar. 18-20.** Days of Action Against War and Racism (www.pephost.org/March18-20).
- Mar. 24.** Argentina. 30th anniversary of the military coup.
- April.** Peru. Election.
- April 8-9.** DC. National Network on Cuba meeting.
- April 23-5. DC.** SOA lobbying, training.
- May.** Colombia. Election.
- June 24.** Mexico City. Marcos' Plenary-Information Session.
- July.** Mexico. Election.

### Campaigns

- Immigration legislation in Congress. The House voted down HR 884, the AgJobs Bill, which would have provided for the adjustment of status of certain foreign agricultural workers, - to provide a stable, legal agricultural workforce, to extend basic legal protections and better working conditions to more workers. Press the Senate to pass such a bill (see Movement News and www.lawg.org/issues/Mexico).
- Debt relief. Stop the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) back-tracking on relief for Nicaragua and Africa. The G-8 agreements qualified 19 countries for debt cancellation but the IMF and the World Bank are increasing their requirements (see www.jubileeusa.org and contact Sameer Dossani, new director of 50 Years is Enough, at 202-463-2265).
- Sweatshops/Maquilas
  - Make Your City Sweatshop Free: Join San Francisco in making city contractors and subcontractors sign a sweat-free code of conduct

for a living wage in safe, non-discriminatory working conditions. No child labor. Unions allowed. (www.globalexchange.org/sweatshops)

- United Students Against Sweatshops demanding collegiate apparel firms source at least 25% from co-ops or unionized factories with a living wage. (US/LEAP at infor@usleap.org or 773-262-6502)
- Join the Campaign for Labor Rights (in DC) and the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladores (in San Antonio) to pressure Levi Strauss to force their supplier of jeans, Lajat Manufacturing in Gomez Palacio, Durango, Mexico, to reopen their factory, rehire the workers and allow them to organize an independent union. (www.coalitionforjustice.net)
- Illegal logging in Honduras: Stop US imports (including those by Home Depot), as our government agreed to do at the G8 summit. Logging is related to poverty, fuel corruption and forest devastation (langelle@sover.net).

### Speaking Tours

- Chiapas Media Project Spring Tour 2006: The land, Zapatista women, militarization, resistance to globalization. Documentary videos and discussion by indigenous youth of Chiapas and Guerrero, Mexico, with Alex Halken, Director (www.chiapasmediaproject.org or 773-583-7728.)
- Mexico Solidarity Network: Staff and grassroots activists on women confronting globalization, fair trade, femicides, immigration policy, Zapatista governing (msn@mexicosolidarity.org or 773-583-7728).

### Special Report

"The Scoreboard on Development: 25 years of diminished progress." Center for Economic and Policy Research. 2005. www.cepr.net/publications/development\_2005\_09.pdf.

### Jobs

Campaign for Labor Rights - National

Coordinator. DC office (www.campaign-forlaborrights.org/about/job-announcement.htm).

School of the Americas Watch - Operations coordinator. DC office (Pam Bowman, pbowman@soaw.org).

### Books

- Haiti.** *Canada in Haiti: Waging war on the poor majority* by Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton. 2005, Red and Fernwood.
- Venezuela.** *The Chavez Code: Cracking US intervention in Venezuela*, by Eva Golinger. 2005.
- Nicaragua.** *Blood on the Border: A memoir of the contra war*, by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. 2005, South End Press.
- Latin America.** *Bananeras: Women transforming the banana unions of Latin America*, by Dana Frank. 2005, South End Press.
- Global.** *Earth Democracy: Justice, sustainability, and peace*, by Vandana Shiva. 2005, South End Press.
- Sickness and Wealth: The corporate assault on global health*, by Meredith Fort, May Anne Mercer, Oscar Guli. 2005, South End Press.

### Study Abroad Program

**Mexico.** 2/5-5/13. Earn credits studying social movements (Mexico Solidarity Network - see Speaking Tours, above).

### Travel

- Argentina and Uruguay:** 3/06 (dates TBA, contact Andres, Non-Violence International, Andres@conteris.net); 3/18-30 (Marin Interfaith Task Force, mitf@igc.org or 415-924-3227. Team with SOAW to urge no more troops to the SOA); 3/22-4/1 (GX Search for alternatives, economics, trade); 8/1-10 (GX - same).
- Bolivia:** 2/4-14 (GX natural resources, social movements).
- Border:** 2/17-20 (GX trade, environment, communities); 4/10-17 (Christian Peacemaker Teams in Chicago, 773-277-0253. Monitor human rights, non-violent public witness).
- Brazil:** 4/1-11 (GX land, agriculture, sustainability); 8/5-16 (GX - same).

**Colombia:** 2/12-26 (GX building a culture of peace); 7/29-8/12 (GX - same); 4/27-5/6 (Campaign for Labor Rights, May Day/celebrate workers' rights, 773-262-6502 or apaul@usleap.org); 5/30-6/12 (Christian Peacemaker Teams, Bogota and Barrancabermeja. Accompanying the people, conflict zone, www.cpt.org).

**Costa Rica:** 5/1-10 (GX ecotourism, sustainability); 7/21-31 (GX same).

**Cuba:** 4/8-15 (GX architecture, city planning, lawyers); 5/14-21 (GX disaster relief, protected areas); 6/23-30 (GX educators, health care professionals).

**Ecuador:** 3/10-21 (GX sustainability, health, biodiversity, Amazon, Andes); 7/14-27 (GX same).

**El Salvador:** 3/3-15 (CISPES, election monitoring and solidarity, strategize with groups in resistance and the FMLN opposition, 212-465-8115); 3/4-11 (CR, woman-to-woman, International Women's Day); 6/6-15 (GATE, martyrdom, San Salvador and Chalatenango, meet leaders, economics); North-South Solidarity Internship, deadline 2/10 (CR); Summer immersion program - deadline 3/15 (CR).

**Guatemala:** 3/25-4/2 (GX fair trade women's co-ops to US students); 4/5-15 (GATE Holy Week); 5/22-6/4 (CGE Environmental justice and sustainable development).

**Honduras:** 2/13-23 (GX the Maya and Garifana legacy); 7/3-11 (GX same). Jamaica: 4/6-16 (GX tourism, globalization, debt).

**Haiti:** 2/20-3/1 (Artists' retreat in Jacmel. www.konpay.org); 4/1-9 (international aid, economy, environment, health, www.konpay.org).

**Mexico:** 2/19-27 (GATE Oaxaca, culture, tour, birds, social problems); 3/21-31 (GATE Mexico City and Apaseo El Alto, Guanajuato); 3/25-4/2 (GX Chiapas, Zapatistas, fair trade); 4/22-5/5 (CETLALIC, the workers' movement in Mexico, learn Spanish, economics, march with miners, Mexico City and Cuernavaca. infor@cetlalic.org.mx or call CETLALIC Alternative Language School: 52-777-317-0850); 5/15-25 (GX,

Oaxaca); 5/15-28 (CGE gender, crime and justice in Mexico); 5/17-27 (GATE Mexico City and Chiapas, indigenous, human rights); 5/26-7/2 (CGE language, culture and social change); 6/26-7/6 (GX Chiapas); 6/28-7/5 (CGE election seminars); 7/16-25 (GX Oaxaca); 8/1-11 (GX Chiapas).

**Nicaragua:** 6/5-15 (GX fair trade, alternatives to economic system); 6/24-7/2 (CGE education for global citizenship, professional development seminar).

**Paraguay:** 7/06 (dates tba. Contact Andres, non-Violence International, Andres@conteris.net).

**Venezuela and Bolivia:** 2/4-14 (GX see box above); 2/16-25 (WP military, media disinformation); 3/5-16 (GX Women's Day, rights and leadership); 3/11-19 (WP a polarized country, our role as US citizens); 4/8-19 (GX new

vision for the Americas, oil, environment); 5/tba (GX Afro-Venezuelan Cultural Festival); 6/21-30 (WP media disinformation); 6/17-25 (GX people's development, health, education); 6/22-7/9 (GX Spanish language); 7/tba (GX land reform and agriculture); 8/3-20 (GX same); 8/11-22 (GX new vision for the Americas, oil, environment).

#### **Codes:**

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

GX: Global Exchange, 800-497-1994, x226; Tanya@globalexchange.org.  
GATE: La Crosse, WI. www.GATE-travel.org.

WP: Witness for Peace, 202-547-5112, www.witnessforpeace.org.

CR: CRISPAZ, volunteer@CRISPAZ.org.

The Supreme court majority has taken pains to indicate that international human rights standards do matter in American law, in the noble tradition of "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" articulated by the Declaration of Independence.

The Nation 12/26/05

#### *Movement News in Brief Continued*

retired Salvadoran generals for torture in the 1980's war (NY times 1/06).

- On 11/30 the National Assembly decided to allow the US to operate an ILEA (International Law Enforcement Academy) in El Salvador.

**FTAA:** George Bush failed 11/7/05 at the annual Summit of the Americas in Mardel Plata, Argentina, to get agreement to re-start negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. He failed also to deny Hugo Chavez a large part of the stage.

#### **Trade:**

- One year from now fast track policy ends in Congress. "Then, with all free trade legislation, we can move from a defensive stance to the offensive." (Sameer Dossani, new Director of 50 Years is Enough, 12/21/05).

**Panama:** Closer links with Cuba and Venezuela have resulted from President Torrijos' 8/20 trip to Havana. He is also promoting ties with Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (latinamerica press 9/21/05).

**Mexico:** Worldwide production of chlorofluorocarbons, which lower the ozone layer, dropped 12% after the Mexican company Quinobasicos stopped producing it, as agreed in the 1987 Montreal Protocol.

**CISPES:** The Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador is 25! The new director is longtime activist and LASC member, Burke Stansbury.

# INTERCONNECT

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**INSIDE: Venezuela, Haiti, Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, SOA, Domestic Spying, Cuba, Paraguay, Peru, Colombia, Trade**

## Movement News

**Paraguay:** agreed 5/05 that 13 units of US troops may stay until 12/06, operate in any part (began 7/05), and be free of any investigation or suits before the International Criminal Court for crimes by US soldiers. Joint maneuvers began 7/11. A semi-clandestine US military air strip can handle B-52s 155 miles from Bolivia (latinamerica press 7/27/05).

**Guatemala:** Tropical storm Stan killed over 2000 people, left 120,000 homeless, destroyed entire crops of corn and coffee (NISGUA, 12/05, www.nisgua.org). "2005 has been the worst year for human rights abuses in Guatemala since the Peace Accords in 1996." Many women raped, eight judicial system members murdered and 75 attacked, 31 journalists attacked, street children disappeared. (Guatemala Human Rights commission, 11/12/05, www.ghrc-usa.org).

**Immigration:** A "cruel" bill, HR 4437, passed the House 239:182 on 12/22, which would prosecute even legal immigrants as aggravated felons (with jail terms and no future legal immigration to be allowed). Any person contracting with undocumented immigrants can be criminally charged with 'alien smuggling.' (See "Campaigns," above).

### Nicaragua:

- Afraid of a Sandanista (FSLN) victory in the 11/06 election, US Under Secretary of State Zoellick, in Managua, accused the Sandinista and Liberal parties of undermining democracy and announced \$4.5 million for the National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) International Republican Institute to assure "free and fair" elections (Quest for Peace 10/24/05). On 12/22 Nicanet reported Concurrent Resolution 252 passed the House asking the Bush administration to assure "democracy" at those elections.
- Shell Oil has been ordered to pay compensation to banana workers for damages due to Nemagon pesticide spraying (Nicaragua Network's hotline, 12/01/05).

**Chile:** "Socialist candidate Michelle Bachelet - a pediatric surgeon, single mother, agnostic, feminist, and former political prisoner" [ is the winner in Chile's presidential runoff]. (The Nation, 1/9-16/06)

**Argentina:** "Venezuela's President Chavez has rescued a number of state-owned factories slated to close; and has breathed life into Argentine ship-building - and saved thousands of jobs - by ordering several ships." (Christian Science Monitor, 11/3/050)

### Peru:

- The presidential candidate leading in the polls is Ollanta Hermala, an indigenous, populist, former army commander who attempted to lead a coup against President Fujimori. He is against free trade and wants to rewrite all contracts with mining and energy corporations to allow more profits to go to the citizens.
- St. Louis University has discovered widespread heavy metal poisoning near an old metallurgical plant (Doe Run Co. of Maryland Heights) - lead, cadmium, and antimony at high levels in children's blood (St. Louis Post Dispatch 12/6/05).

### Colombia:

- The US Congress approved \$734 million for the Andean Counter-narcotics Initiative in the 2006 Appropriations Bill, 80% to go to the Colombian military and police (Latin America Working Group, 11/8, www.lawg.org).
- Five nations of the Andean community are among the 10 most biodiverse countries on the planet. Colombia has 45,000 varieties of flowering plants (latinamerica press 7/27/05).

### El Salvador:

- A US federal appeals court reversed itself and upheld a verdict against two