



INTERCONNECT

*For Grassroots Movement-Building and Sharing of Resources
Within the US-Latin America Solidarity Community*

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Dear Reader,

In the sixteen years we have had the privilege of editing this newsletter we have never put together a more important issue than this one - showing the clash between US foreign policy and the will of the people in Latin America. The emphasis of the Latin America Solidarity Movement is to insist on the right of our neighbors in the South to pursue their ways of building democracies, their right to their own natural resources and their right to control their own economies - and their own destinies.

Our Compañeros and compañeras have known for years that our job is right here at home. When asked how North Americans could be most useful, the response always has been, "Go home and change your country's foreign policy." (Today we would have to add, "and change our domestic policy, as well." It is imperative to end FBI raids, ICE round-ups, and other abridgements of our basic freedoms.)

Morally and ethically we must continue to challenge unjust US foreign policy and call for an end to the increasing militarization in Latin America and on our borders.

Peter and Gail Mott Co-editors

Unfortunately, there is not room in the print version for the very important article, "Taking a Stand Against FBI Repression of the International Solidarity Movement" by Meredith Aby or for the tribute to Leonard Weinglass.

Much as we, too, prefer to read a "real" newsletter we are finding that the cost and time to get out the print version is prohibitive. Therefore, this will be the next-to-the-last time we will publish it. We hope you will sign up for the e-mail version at interconnect_mott@frontiernet.net. It contains everything - plus remarkable photos in color - and occasional Action Alerts.

We thank you for being loyal readers - and for your financial contributions.

The People Speak: President Ollanta Humala of Peru

Our corporate media have referred to most democratically elected presidents in this hemisphere as "leftist." But the trend in recent years to elect populist progressives is unmistakable: Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Nicaragua, El Salvador and, on June 5, 2011, Ollanta Humala of Peru. If we include recently elected progressives who have been removed by US-backed military coups, then we should add Haiti and Honduras for a total of twelve.

Two of our movement's star reporters tell us more about Ollanta Humala:

On June 7, Benjamin Dangl wrote (excerpted from UpsideDownWorld.org): "Ollanta is an Incan name meaning 'the warrior everyone looks to.' Indeed, all eyes were on the leftist president-elect as he greeted the crowd just before midnight with the words, "We won the elections!"

"Humala, a former military officer who led a failed military uprising in 2000, lost the election in 2006 to Alan Garcia. This year he narrowly defeated Kieko Fujimori, the daughter of ex-president Alberto Fujimori, who was jailed in 2007 for corruption and crimes against humanity. If elected, Kieko would have likely worked to release her father from jail and carry on his administration's capitalist and repressive policies.

"This election puts Humala among a growing number of leftist presidents in Latin America and offers hope to the poorest sectors of Peruvian society...

"Peru's economy has been booming for the past decade, with 7 percent growth expected this year - one of the highest growth rates internationally. Sixty five percent of the country's export income comes from the mining industry, and investors are expected to provide over \$40 billion in the coming decade for mining operations. Yet many Peruvians have not benefited from this growth. This is partly because former administrations have not been interested in redistributing wealth to the poor through social and devel-

opment programs.

"Humala wants to change that. He plans to redistribute wealth by increasing taxes on the lucrative mining industry. The new government funds will go to expanding access to water, electricity and homes, and providing free school lunches and preschool care. The president-elect also has pledged to expand pensions and healthcare for the poor and lower gas exports to reduce the cost of this resource for Peruvians."

Written before the election: Excerpts from an article by Mark Weisbrot, at the Center for Economic and Policy Research, published by The Guardian (UK) on June 2, 2011.

"Left-populist and former military officer Ollanta Humala is facing off against Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of Peru's former authoritarian ruler Alberto Fujimori, who was president from 1990-2000. Alberto Fujimori is in jail, serving a 25-year sentence for multiple political murders, kidnapping, and corruption...including the forced sterilization of tens of thousands of women, mostly indigenous..."

"Between the two candidates, whom do you think Washington would prefer?...I spoke Monday night with Gustavo Gorriti in Lima, an award-winning Peruvian investigative journalist who was one of the people that Alberto Fujimori was convicted of kidnapping. 'The U.S. Embassy strongly opposes Humala's candidacy,' he said..."

"Humala is...accused of being an ally of Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez. ... Chávez has been demonized throughout the hemispheric media, but almost all governments in South America are 'allies of Chávez'...."

"So why would Washington want Fujimori? The answer is quite simple: it's about Washington's waning influence and power in its former 'back yard' of Latin America."



Honduras: The Crisis, the Puzzle, the Cartagena Process And the Return of Zelaya – Against US Wishes

Excerpted with permission from an article by Alexander Main in Common Dreams.org, 5/19/11

[Ed. note: For a fascinating, first-person account of the accompaniment of President Zelaya by Lisa Sullivan and Fr. Roy Bourgeois, go to Lisa Sullivan's article at www.soaw.org.

org.

As the violence escalates and the people courageously resist, the US pushes to legitimize the illegal, post-coup government of Porfirio Lobo – including the rapid readmission of Honduras into the OAS. The question is: How was the spectacular return of President Zelaya engineered? Did the unlikely team of Presidents Chavez of Venezuela, Santos of Colombia, - even Lobo of Honduras (and the deposed President Zelaya by telephone) outflank the US - and produce a rave notice about Hugo Chavez from Secretary of State Clinton?

This astute analysis by Alexander Main, a policy analyst at the Center for Economic and Policy Research (www.cepr.net) – written two days before the Zelaya return – is "must reading." Click here to read the complete article in Common Dreams: What Now for a Post-Coup Honduras?]

Many Latin America watchers were thrown for a loop last month when a bilateral meeting in Cartagena, Colombia, between Presidents Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia suddenly metamorphosed into a trilateral encounter that included Porfirio Lobo, the controversial president of Honduras. It was hard enough grappling with the image of Chavez and Santos, considered to be arch-enemies only a year ago, slapping one another on the back and heralding warm relations between their countries. Now it appeared that Chavez had also warmed up to Lobo, the leader of a government that Venezuela and many other South American countries had refused to recognize since the coup of June 28, 2009 that toppled democratically-elected president Manuel Zelaya.

...Chávez had not in fact agreed to support Honduras' immediate return to the OAS. Instead the three leaders had drawn up a road map for Honduras' possible return with the direct input of exiled former president Mel Zelaya, who was reached by phone during the meeting.

According to the Venezuelan government four basic conditions, formulated primarily by Zelaya, were discussed during the closed-door meeting: the secure return of Zelaya and other officials exiled during and after the 2009 coup; an end to the persecution of members of the anti-coup National Popular Resistance Front (FNRP, by its Spanish initials); human rights guarantees and the investigation of human rights violations since the coup; guarantees for the holding of a future constituent assembly; and the recognition of the FNRP as a political organization. This set of conditions went further politically than the recommendations made in a July 2010 report by a High-Level OAS Commission in which Venezuela was notably absent and the U.S. and a number of right-wing Latin American countries played a dominant role.

The latter report's recommendations were meant to pave the way for Honduras' return to the OAS, but appeared to be unacceptable to both Zelaya and the Lobo regime.

On April 27th, the foreign ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean, convened in Caracas for a preparatory meeting of the new CELAC regional group, issued a statement of support for the Cartagena mediation process. No such statement was made by the US, however.

On May 2, Honduran officials triumphantly announced that an appeals court had dismissed all of the remaining criminal

charges against Zelaya.

Human rights groups and the FNRP have argued that, on the contrary, Lobo has made little concrete effort to advance these objectives and that the human rights situation remains as bad as ever. As Santa Cruz professor Dana Frank points out in the Nation: "to this day no one has been prosecuted or convicted for any of the politically-motivated killings of 34 members of the opposition and 10 journalists since Lobo took office, let alone for the over 300 killings by state security forces since the coup, according to COFA-DEH (Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras)."

Zelaya issued a communiqué that appeared to echo the sentiment of many South American nations: The United States, he said, had made "diplomatic statements that undermined the possibilities of success of the [Cartagena] process..." He called on the U.S. to revise its position and acknowledge and support the mediation process, in order "to achieve a real and viable solution to the Honduran political situation." Perhaps more than anything, the U.S. is not prepared to accept a political mediation in Honduras in which it doesn't play a leading role. The U.S. has traditionally been deeply involved in the internal affairs of Honduras, a country once dubbed the USS Honduras because of the important US military presence there and because the tiny nation served as a springboard for U.S. intervention in other Central American countries. As the recent bilateral agreements to expand the U.S. military presence in Honduras show, the country continues to be of great strategic importance to the U.S.

It's interesting to note that, back in July of 2009, it was the Obama administration that took the key discussions on Honduras out of the OAS by initiating its own mediation process together with then Costa Rican president Oscar Arias. The outcome of the process – known as the San Jose-Tegucigalpa agreement – satisfied the U.S. despite the fact that it failed to restore democracy in Honduras. It didn't, however, satisfy the majority of the hemisphere's governments, who still refuse to recognize the elections which brought Lobo to power; and it failed to satisfy Zelaya and the FNRP, who remained politically marginalized and were confronted with constant intimidation and attacks.

This is not to suggest that the Colombia/Venezuela mediation is necessarily destined to bring a just, peaceful solution to Honduras' political and social crisis. There are fears that if Zelaya does return soon to Honduras [as has now happened], the other prerequisites involving human rights and a possible revision of the country's profoundly conservative and non-inclusive political system will be swept aside. As a response to these fears, a joint Colombian/Venezuelan verification commission has been proposed as a mechanism of enforcement to ensure that the Lobo government would follow through on the conditions outlined in Cartagena.

Haiti After The Return: Tout Moun Se Moun - by Robert Roth

On March 18th, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his family returned to Haiti from a 7-year forced exile in South Africa brought about by the violent U.S.-orchestrated coup

in 2004. The U.S. government vehemently opposed Aristide's return, with President Obama even placing a last-minute call to President Zuma of South Africa in an attempt to stop the plane from taking off.

In a speech at Toussaint Louverture airport in Port-au-Prince shortly after his plane touched down, Aristide commented on Haiti's presidential election, from which his party, Fanmi Lavalas, the most popular in the country, had been banned:

"The problem is exclusion. The solution is inclusion. Exclusion of Fanmi Lavalas is the exclusion of the majority. And the exclusion of the majority is like cutting off the very branch we are all sitting on. Every Haitian without exception, because every person is a human being, so the vote of every person counts."

Thousands of Haiti's poor followed Aristide's car as it moved from the airport, through the streets of Port-au-Prince. When the car reached the house, people climbed over walls, rushed past security and engulfed the courtyard. This was their victory -- one they had sacrificed so much to achieve. It was beautiful to be there.

Aristide has made clear that his focus will be popular education. Haiti's education system has enforced social apartheid – denying access to the poor while empowering a tiny elite. During the Lavalas administrations, more schools were built in Haiti than in its entire history. Adult literacy programs – often led by women – reduced the illiteracy rate.

When the Aristide Foundation's University (UniFA) opened a Medical School in 2001, it recruited and gave scholarships to students from the poorest communities throughout Haiti, each of whom committed to return to their communities upon graduation. These were revolutionary initiatives in a country whose elite has worked for generations to keep the poor away from any form of literacy or higher education. It was no accident that U.S. and UN forces drove students out of the campus after the 2004 coup and turned the building into a military barracks.

In its goals and practice, the University embodies Aristide's slogan, "Tout Moun Se Moun" – every one, each person counts. Its reopening would be a dramatic advance for social change in Haiti.

For all the joy of his homecoming, President Aristide returns to a dire situation. Partnering with the Haitian elite, the U.S. is setting up sweatshops in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien and preparing to dig up the country's mineral wealth. Bill Clinton co-chairs an on-going Interim Haiti Recovery Commission, which supposedly has raised over \$10 billion – little of it reaching the victims of the earthquake, most of whom still sleep under sheets of plastic. U.S. AID pours money into U.S.-based NGO's that pay more for staff than for projects. Cholera – introduced to Haiti by UN forces from Nepal – has spread, with a recent Harvard/UCSF study predicting 800,000 cases. And Jean-Claude Duvalier ("Baby Doc") has



The Author, Robert Roth

returned, a specter haunting the country anew.

The UN military occupation (MINUSTAH), a throwback to the days of direct colonial rule, has continued to expand. Under the leadership of the Brazilian military, there are now 12,279 foreign soldiers and police in Haiti. Among the chief occupiers are troops from Latin America: Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru and Uruguay – all wearing blue helmets and pointing their guns at Haitians.

As if to rub salt into the wounds, there is the new president, Michel Martelly, selected in an electoral charade boycotted by 80% of eligible voters. A kompa singer and long-time proponent of Duvalier, Martelly worked with the dreaded FRAPH death squads that killed over 5000 people in Haiti after the first coup against Aristide in 1991. He has made the reestablishment of Haiti's hated military a priority of his administration. In the past, he has called for a ban on "all strikes and demonstrations." In a revolting video released right before the election, Martelly called Lavalas members "faggots" and threatened sexual violence against Aristide.

Little of this was mentioned when Martelly obediently traveled to Washington soon after his election. He and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton held a joint press conference, where a beaming Clinton announced that the United States was behind Martelly "all the way." He then made the rounds with the structural adjustment crowd at the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, all of whom promised more intervention in Haiti.

Haitians will have something to say about these plans. Haiti's movement has shown its resilience – and its roots are sunk very deep. The fundamental goal of coups and counter-insurgency is to sever the connection between a popular movement and the people, to destroy even the belief that transformative social change is possible. At Aristide's house, in the streets of Port-au-Prince, it was clear that the coup and occupation have not been able to do this. Fueled by a hard-won victory, grass roots organizers - who have never stopped their work - have taken heart. And a trusted voice of the poor is now back, come what may.

[The author is a co-founder of the Haiti Action Committee in the Bay Area and a board member of the Haiti Emergency Relief Fund. He was in Haiti for President Aristide's return.] For more information about Haiti Action Committee: www.haitisolidarity.net

To find out about the work of the Haiti Emergency Relief Fund, please go to: www.haitiemergencyrelief.org.

Yes, Virginia, There is Evil in the World

- by Chuck Kaufman

I have been hearing a lot lately that we need to be proactive; that we need to focus our work on positive things. If we believe that a better world is possible, we need to build that better world. All that is true – up to a point.



The Author -
Chuck Kaufman

Augusto C. Sandino, the Nicaraguan "General of Free Men", had a vision. He, and a group that shared his vision, planned to start a utopian, self-sustaining and democratic commune where they could build their own version of a better world. But he knew that the commune would never be allowed to survive, much less thrive, while his country was occupied by US marines. So he led a successful, six-year guerrilla war from 1927-1933 to oust the foreign invaders. He left from a peace dinner with the country's president thinking that he could finally lay down his sword and take up his plow. Instead he was abducted by troops trained by the marines to keep "order" in their stead. To this day his body has not been found, his community remains a dream, and his country suffered through 45 years of US-supported dictatorship before the Sandinista Triumph in 1979.

To paraphrase a Christmas editorial in the 1897 New York Sun, "Yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world."

The Mexican group, Las Abejas (The Bees), had a dream as well. They were a pacifist group of Zapatista supporters in the community of Acteal, Chiapas. On December 22, 1997, while in a prayer meeting at the Catholic Church, they were set upon by the paramilitary group Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice). Forty-five people were slaughtered over several hours while the near-by Mexican army refused to intervene. Women and children were among those massacred including pregnant women who were stabbed or shot in the belly to insure that their unborn children did not survive.

Yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world.

On April 5, 2010, WikiLeaks released a classified US military video, shot from the gun-site camera of an Apache helicopter, showing the indiscriminate killing in Iraq of over a dozen people including two Reuters news staff, and the wounding of two young children. The video included audio of the American soldiers glorying in the slaughter.

Yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world.

Torture at Abu Graib, indefinite imprisonment at Guantanamo Bay, predator drones killing women and children in Pakistan, Israelis firing on unarmed Palestinians during the commemoration of Al Nakba (The Catastrophe), mass graves in Mexico, massacres in Guatemala, police firing US-donated tear gas canisters at demonstrators' heads in Honduras, racist laws against immigrants, house raids and grand jury subpoenas for peace activists in the American Midwest, oh yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world.

After a decade in the current anti-war movement, a quarter century in Latin America solidarity, and a life-time of witnessing wars, coups, bombings, and democracy only for those who can pay for it, I'm tired and frustrated. It would be nice to weed my own garden for awhile, to grow and eat organic vegetables.

But more and more I look to the Abolition Movement, both slave and free, for my inspiration and my reason to go on. Slavery would not have ended without struggle. I don't buy the myth that it was doomed by economic factors. That's the story they tell us so we won't believe that our struggles make a difference. No amount of focus on positive things, on personal fulfillment, on community joy would have lanced the awful pustule, that maggot-filled boil that was chattel slavery. Only through men and women, black and white, putting their lives, their fortunes and their health on

the line to change the culture of their day, was this blot on our humanity eradicated from our shores.

No amount of prayer and meditation, no amount of giving to the poor, no amount of being nice to your maid or generous to her children brought about the Voting Rights Act, equal education, and an end to lynching and the Ku Klux Klan. No. It came about through human beings, white and black and brown, militantly wrestling with evil and accepting the beatings, the jailings, the killings that shocked the conscience of society. It came about because people like you and me refused to stop or be distracted until the laws and the culture which defended racial supremacy were changed and the process of recognizing the humanness of us all could begin.

Mothers Day was not founded to honor our mothers; it was founded by mothers who had lost their sons in the Civil War as a way for them to demand an end to war.

So yes, let us focus on the positive. Let us build our sustainable communities. Let us practice our yoga or religion or whatever gives us personal strength and fortitude to carry on. But let us never forget that there is evil in the world; evil that has the capability to destroy all our good works. Let us never mistake actions that make us feel good with actions that are necessary. If we are to build a better world, we must first defeat the evil that makes this one so bad for so many. There is no other way forward than through struggle.

As citizens and residents of the country that is the greatest threat to world peace, the greatest threat to human survival, we have a moral obligation to struggle against evil. To react IS to focus on the positive. We are at a moment in history when it is not possible to live a moral life, when it is not possible to build a better world, unless we are every day on the barricades struggling to end the wars, struggling to cut the bloated Pentagon budget, struggling to stop the corporate rape of the environment, struggling for an end to Empire and corporate greed.

In reality, it is a false dichotomy to say we have to be either reactive or proactive. We have to be both. No matter how tired or frustrated we feel at times, our lives are easy. Very few of us don't know how we will feed our children tonight. Very few of us worry that we will be killed by paramilitaries or police on our way home from work. Very few of us live with the stress of knowing that a knock on the door could end our freedom or a hellfire missile through the roof could end our life. The truth is, we really do have the capacity to work on those things which we believe will build a better world while at the same time we struggle against those things which inhibit its birth. We really have no other choice.

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must... undergo the fatigues of supporting it. – Thomas Paine

[The author is national co-coordinator of the Alliance for Global Justice.]

Displaced from Home, Here and There

– by John Lindsay-Poland

The housing crisis has hit as hard in Florida as anywhere else in the country. More than a quarter million homes have been foreclosed in the state since the crisis began in 2007.

Among the cities in the state suffering the most from this is Miami.

During the same period, the federal government invested more than \$400 million in construction of buildings in Miami – but it wasn't for those staying with relatives or surfing couches or sleeping on the street. It was for the United States Southern Command, the Pentagon's operational arm for Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Lest we forget, the mission of the military is centered on war. And in SouthCom's "area of responsibility" (a phrase that embeds assumptions about both U.S. control in the region and the Pentagon's role relative to civilian agencies), the war is in Colombia – recently recognized by its government. And the most prominent result of that war is massive forced displacement – more than 230,000 Colombians last year, adding to the more than four million already and constituting the largest population of internally displaced people in the world.

"The security situation today in Colombia is drastically different, thanks in large part to the sustained efforts of the Government of Colombia, supported by Plan Colombia and its corresponding U.S. Government-sponsored initiatives," Southern Command chief General Douglas Fraser told senators in March. But, after enumerating the body counts of FARC commanders killed, Fraser noted that "while Colombia's gains have been impressive, they are reversible." He did not mention the continued massive displacement of people by violence.

Fraser was lobbying for funding, of course. He also thanked the Congressmen and women for \$25 million for funding the construction of barracks for soldiers on the principal U.S. military base in Honduras, Soto Cano (also called Palermola).

The barracks will replace "temporary" housing for U.S. troops in Soto Cano, defined as temporary as a way around the Honduran constitution's prohibition on permanent foreign military troops. In May, more than 70 religious leaders, academics, and organizations wrote to companies interested in the Soto Cano contract, urging them not to bid on it because of the base's violation of Honduras sovereignty and its support for Honduran forces that have carried out increased brutality against civilians.

SouthCom's budget is opaque, nearly impossible to discern as a whole, and therefore to debate in a democratic manner, even if Congress had the will to do so. But the SouthCom headquarters itself is tangible. I suspect many people reading this have passed through the Miami airport en route to Latin America.

From October 8 to 10, SouthCom Watch in Miami will be joined by other local and national organizations for a conference, a protest at the SouthCom headquarters, and a solidarity visit with nearby Immokalee workers. Confronting the "brain of the beast," the gathering will observe 519 years of militarization since the Nina, Pinta, and the Santa Maria came to the Americas. For information on how to participate in the October 8-10 events, contact Ray at mrrratpp@aol.com 754-423-0051 or Linda at lindaliska@yahoo.com 305-801-0245.

Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa, who terminated the agreement for U.S. use of the Manta base in his country, said

he would be happy to have a U.S. base – as long as Ecuador can have a base in Florida. SouthCom Watch organizer Ray del Papa suggests wryly that other nations might scout out land for a base across the street from SouthCom.

It may be that the most impactful developments for demilitarizing U.S. policy in Latin America come from the region itself. But that doesn't mean our efforts should only be in solidarity with processes in Latin America. Change in our country is inevitable. It will be better if we engage our compatriots to change from within as well as applaud changes coming from without.

[The author is research and advocacy director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He can be reached at johnlp@forusa.org.]

¡Alto a la Militarización! Stop the Militarization! A Reflection on the LASC Education and Strategy Conference

- by Lisa Fuller and Alexis Stoumbelis

From April 12-14, over four hundred students, solidarity activists, artists, community organizers and academics gathered at American University to rally against militarization of the Americas for the fifth conference of the Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC). The weekend's goal was to raise consciousness about escalating militarization throughout the Americas – from seven proposed U.S. military bases in Colombia to police collaboration with Homeland Security through the "Secure Communities" program – and to develop solidarity strategies to accompany anti-militarization movements in Latin America.

Movement leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean shared the analysis, images and stories guiding their movements: Testimony from Honduras, where over three hundred resistance leaders and LGBT activists have been assassinated since the 2009 coup against President Zelaya; from Mexico, where nearly 40,000 people have been killed in the first four years of the U.S.-sponsored "War on Drugs;" and from Haiti, where UN "peacekeeping forces" continue their repressive occupation. These exposed the extent of and linkages within the aggressive U.S. agenda throughout the hemisphere. The U.S. currently spends an estimated \$1 billion every year in police and military "aid" to Latin America (Source: Alliance for Global Justice).

Most importantly, speakers and workshop facilitators highlighted the economic and political reasons why the U.S. continues to push its military might throughout region. During his opening address, Jesus Emilio Tuberquia, a leader in the San José de Apartadó peace community in Colombia, held up a dollar bill and a Colombian peso, declaring, "This is the reason for all the violence we must live through!" before tearing up the bills into tiny pieces and exhorting the participants to seek cooperative alternatives as his community has done.

Dan Kovalik, Assistant General Counsel for the United Steelworkers, also emphasized this when discussing the pending U.S. free trade agreement with Colombia where, since President Uribe took office in 2002, more union organizers have been murdered than in the rest of the world combined.

Over the weekend, a broader analysis emerged around the corporate economic agenda that fuels most of this militarization. First, militarization creates tremendous financial benefits to U.S. weapons manufacturers and private security contractors. Second, the regions and communities that are the sites of the most intense militarization, from Colombia to Guatemala to Mexico, are typically home to valuable natural resources, including gold, oil and land itself.

Hector Aristizábal, Colombian artist and organizer, opened Saturday's full workshop schedule with a dynamic storytelling of a Cherokee creation legend. He eventually directed the full auditorium in singing operas to one another, tapping into the healing and powerful artistic centers necessary to fuel major political change.

Saturday featured skills-based workshops to build a stronger grassroots movement, from using FOIA requests to do research for anti-militarization campaigns to building multilingual and multiracial movements for social justice.

Much of Sunday was spent caucusing by sector – students, labor, women, faith – to define collaborative strategies and priorities to fight U.S. militarism in its multiple forms.

Despite the enormous challenges to organizing against the military-industrial complex, we left the conference in high spirits. Special thanks are due to the artists and activists who shared their music and poetry with us throughout the conference, further emphasizing the importance of integrating our cultures into the heart of our campaigns and movements. We also gained incredible inspiration from the powerful resistance movements throughout Latin America, from the Continental Campaign against Military Bases to the No Más Sangre movement being led by women and youth in Ciudad Juárez, México, against the "War on Drugs."

Perhaps the greatest reason why we left the conference with the spirit of struggle was Sunday's exciting mobilization to the White House, led by School of the Americas Watch, where twenty seven people were arrested in an act of civil disobedience to demand an end to militarization and closure of the infamous School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. Led by solidarity activists, religious leaders and incredible puppets – from an abuela trailed by floating handkerchiefs, representing the mothers of the disappeared, to the four horsemen of the apocalypse led by Uncle Sam on stilts - we marched together to the gates of the White House for a spirited, bilingual rally to show our commitment to the on-going struggle for social justice and lasting peace.

[Stoumbelis is Co-Director of CISPES and Fuller an activist there.]

Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC) Conference a Success

- by Jeremy Miller (Reprinted with permission of "Fight-Back")

About 350 people came together in Washington, DC, on April 9-10, to attend the LASC conference. The LASC is an association of national and local U.S.-based grassroots Latin America and Caribbean solidarity groups working towards common goals and strategies of self-determination.

82 groups co-sponsored the event.

In addition, activists from Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, Haiti and other countries had the opportunity to meet, network, build relationships and talk strategy with one another.

Chuck Kaufman, the National Co-Coordinator of Alliance for Global Justice and a member of the LASC Coordinating Committee, opened the first plenary of the conference stating, "We are convening this conference tonight to build a stronger movement to end U.S. militarism and the militarization of relations with Latin America. Let us vow not to let this be just another conference. Let us vow to make linkages here that will last beyond Sunday afternoon. Let us vow to work together into the future to grow the movement within our institutions of faith, within the labor movement, within academia and among youth and students, among veterans and women from whom arise so many of our leaders..."

Kaufman also spoke about the FBI raids and grand jury witch hunt against international solidarity activists, stating, "A grand jury is considering absurd criminal charges of material support to terrorists for their work on behalf of peace in Colombia and Palestine. The abolition movement had its Nat Turners, Harriet Tubmans, John Browns and William Lloyd Garrisons and thousands whose names we do not know. Well, we have our Bradley Mannings, Cindy Sheehans, Roy Bourgeois, Amy Goodmans and Meredith Abys. And we have thousands more like those of us in this room. But sometimes we seek excuses for why we cannot win. Can you imagine John Brown saying, 'Well, ending slavery isn't on the Congressional agenda this year. We'll just have to work to elect more Republicans, '?"

There were almost 50 workshops on the labor movement, the student movement, ending militarization of Latin America and other issues.

Sarah Buchner of UNC-Asheville Students for a Democratic Society spoke about the workshops. "I really enjoyed the time spent in the workshops I attended here. Being able to meet and share ideas with people around the movement was irreplaceable. It is so good to be able to meet, help and be challenged by those doing similar work around the world."

At the Committee to Stop FBI Repression's workshop, panel members spoke on their experiences being harassed by the FBI. Two members of the panel, Sarah Smith and Meredith Aby, were subpoenaed by the Grand Jury; and Kosta Harlan, the third panelist, was visited by the FBI in an attempt at intimidation.

Aby also spoke about the FBI raids at the concert later in the evening. "It's important to understand that it isn't just an assault on Colombia and Palestine solidarity activists. It's an assault on the anti-war movement as a whole. We have to come together and fight it now!"

When asked what Kaufman thought about the conference he had this to say. "I personally benchmark for whether the conference was a success by whether any of the sector strategy sessions resulted in a commitment by the participants to continue to work to build the movement against U.S. militarism within their sector. The faith-based caucus, as well as the

women's, youth and student, environmental and labor caucuses all set up structures and agreed on strategies to grow

the movement. So, yes, for me the conference was a success and now we need to go forward to end the culture of U.S. militarism and to refound our nation."

RESOURCES

Major Events

October 8-10. Miami. End US Militarization of Latin America. Conference and protest (see above article by John Lindsay-Poland).

Organization spotlight: Peace Brigades International, USA, deploys teams of international observers providing protective accompaniment to threatened activists in areas of conflict. Their unique protection strategy involves unarmed bodyguards, multi-level diplomacy, and peace education. Their main goals, in addition to ensuring their physical safety, is to guarantee that their voices are heard and their work for peace with justice can continue and gain visibility and strength. info@pbiousa.org; www.pbiousa.org.

Books

- From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia: Class Struggle, Indigenous Liberation, and the Politics of Evo Morales, by Jeffrey R. Webber. Haymarket Books, Paperback, March, 2011. \$19.00. Benjamin Dangl, author of *The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia*, says: "This book provides a comprehensive and illuminating look at the dramatic changes that have taken place in Bolivia over the past decade. Drawing from extensive research, interviews, and firsthand experiences, Webber engages the intricate landscape of Bolivian politics in its entirety, assessing the victories, shortcomings, and prospects of the country's diverse left."

- Amexica: War Along the Borderlands by Ed Vulliamy. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010 (see review in this issue).

DVD: "All That Glitters Isn't Gold: A story of Exploitation and Resistance." Rights Action, www.rightsaction.org; info@rightsaction.org. 55 min. English/Spanish with English subtitles. "Grave complications experienced by the residents of Siria Valley...home of the largest open-pit heap-leach mine in Honduras. Owned by Canada's Goldcorp."

Job Opening: SOAW Operations and Development Coordinator. National Office in DC. hvoss@soaw.org.

Website: Dawn Paley's Weekly WikiLeaks Review: WikiLeaksLatinAmerica, WLLA@googlegroups.com.

Travel

BOLIVIA: 8/6-21 (FS Climate Change: rare access to rural communities, local NGOs, research institutions, producers' associations and social movements working for food and climate justice in Bolivia.)

COLOMBIA: 7/14-27 (CPT with church, human rights and social justice organizers in Bogotá and in Barrancabermeja; the struggle of small farmers to have their human rights respected.)

CUBA: 9/9-19 (WP Environmentalism in Cuba); 1/11-11 (FS Cuba Organic: Revolution and Evolution – what happens when national policy prioritizes organic farming).

HONDURAS: 7/31-8/7 (La Voz de Los de Abajo. Teachers' delegation. vickicervantes@yahoo.com); 9/10-18 (WP Human Rights Crisis, US Military Aid); 10/14-24 (WP Human Rights Crisis, US Military Aid).

MEXICO: 7/303-8/8 (WP How US Military Aid Fuels Displacement and Immigration); 9/21-10/1 (WP Food, Farms, and Roots of Migration); 12/20-27 (WP Christmas in Oaxaca, Food Sovereignty, "Night of the Radishes"); 12/20-17 (FS Conserving Oaxaca's Food & Agriculture Heritage, Christmas in Oaxaca, "Night of the Radishes," threats to rural livelihood.)

NICARAGUA: 7/14-28 (WP Intercultural Teen Delegation, Social Justice).

Please visit websites of organizations below to find current list of delegations.

CODES:

AGJ: Alliance for Global Justice, 202-544-9355, afgj@afgj.org, www.afgj.org.

BL: BorderLinks, 520-628-8263, education@borderlinks.org, www.borderlinks.org.

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

CISPES: Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. www.cispes.org; rebecca@cispes.org.

CPT: Christian Peacemaker Teams, PO Box 6508, Chicago, IL 60680. 773-277-0291, delegations@cpt.org, www.cpt.org.

FS: Food Sovereignty. Tanya at tkerssen@foodfirst.org; (510) 654-4400, ext. 223

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

GX: Global Exchange. 415.255.7296. <http://globalexchange.org/countries/americas>.

SOAW: School of the Americas Watch. 202-234-3440; www.soaw.org/delegations.

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

TFA: Task Force of the Americas. 415-924-3227, www.mitfamericas.org.

Movement News In Brief

Ecuador: (1) Chevron is attempting to slither out of an \$8 billion judgment rendered on 2/13/11 by a trial court in Ecuador for "environmental damage with cancer deaths and other illnesses caused by its Texaco unit (Truthout 2/15/11 by Greg Palast). (2) President Correa stated that "Ecuador will never give its support for Honduras to return to the OAS...it is fundamental to punish those responsible for the coup." (Xinhua 5/27/11; <http://english.peopledaily.com>). [Ed. note: On 5/31 the OAS voted 31-1 to return Honduras – per US wishes – with Ecuador the lone dissenter. See article by Alexander Main, above.]

El Salvador: Spanish judge Eloy Velasco indicted 20 Salvadoran ex-military officials (many trained at the SOA) for the 1989 slaying of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter, and issued international arrest warrants to Interpol (AP 5/30/11 by Hendrik Voss of SOA Watch). Among those indicted are former defense ministers General Humberto Larrios and Colonel René Emilio Ponce (recently deceased), General Juan Rafael Bustillo, Colonel Juan Orlando Zepeda, Colonel Inocente Orlando Montano, and Colonel Francisco Elena Fuentes, members of the military high command that ordered the massacre in the midst of an FMLN offensive.

Venezuela: (1) "Venezuela halts nuclear program after Japan disaster." Scrapped was the plan for a Russian-built 4000 MW nuclear plant (Reuters, 3/16/11 from Timeteo Jeffries). (2) USAID closes Office of Transition Initiatives, "which used millions of dollars to finance actions aimed at destabilizing the country and removing President Hugo Chavez." (Eva Golinger Reports, 2/10/11, laborexchange-n@organizerweb.com).

Colombia: President Santos supports legalizing drugs if that would reduce violence and crime (Mercopres, 2/14/11. thanks to Dave Davis).

Costa Rica: (1) "On 4/28/11 the Administrative Law Court of CR nullified the 2008 decree of then president Arias which authorized police to use military weapons..." (Luis Robato Bolancos, zamotol@raesa.co.cr, 5/30/11). (2) WikiLeaks posted cables from the US Embassy showing a six-month US campaign to keep Costa Rica sending its police to the SOA despite an earlier agreement by President Arias with SOA Watch to withdraw. US Ambassador Langelate informed Arias that they would lose \$1.2 million in cooperative agreements (from Lisa Sullivan in Marin Task Force on the Americas, Spring/11.)

Bolivia: On 11/22/10, at a regional forum of defense ministers (including the US) President Evo Morales denounced US drug and terrorism-related policies as pretexts for interventionism. "The US beat us in Honduras, the North American empire beat us. But the people of America also won in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. The score is 3 to 1.(From NACLA Report on the Americas 1-2/11).

Global Exchange. On June 1, Global Exchange hosted the Ninth Annual Human Rights Awards. Recipients included: UN Ambassador for Bolivia Pablo Solón, a strong proponent of climate justice and the Rights of Nature. Amb. Solón spoke of Bolivia's efforts to have an urgent, new shift at the UN level to recognize the Rights of Mother Earth – a shift to re-define our relationship with nature and combat climate change. He invited all present to re-evaluate our understanding of nature's rights and stand up as members of social movements and civil society to take part in the change our world so desperately needs. Javier Sicilia, a poet who lost his son in a drug war massacre and who now is building a movement to free Mexico from the spiraling violence. Mr. Sicilia's message to attendees was a powerful challenge for those of us in the United States to stand up and support the people of Mexico, to end the failed US Drug War, to end the weapons trade that arms criminals in Mexico, and to stop military aid through the Merida Initiative. Global Exchange was privileged to honor Javier and provide a medium for him to tell the story of Mexico's tragedy and to work for change.

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