



INTERCONNECT

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

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Jean Wilfred on the destroyed streets of once-bustling downtown Port-au-Prince. January 24, 2010. Credit Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross.

Disaster in Haiti

As we go to press all of us are shaken to the core by the agony and suffering we see daily on our screens. It is in good part Western economic and political domination of Haiti that has left the people there completely vulnerable. How can we respond? Jubilee USA urges us to call on the Obama administration to take two specific steps to ensure a quick and just response to the crisis in Haiti: (1) Provide massive assistance for relief and reconstruction in the form of grants, not loans; (2) Cancel the rest of Haiti's debt. The World Bank announced that it is putting a moratorium on debt service for five years - a positive first step; and the IMF has announced a moratorium on debt service for two years. But it is essential to keep strong pressure on these institutions and our government..

Peter and Gail Mott

Co-Editors

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Special issue on US Militarization of the Continent

In this age of Obama are Latin America relations souring? In this issue we list many current problems and challenges for our movement. The urgent task for us is to persuade our government to change course, to see the democratic spirit that is sweeping Latin America not as a threat but an opportunity for true partnership.

Most alarming reports

* **Copenhagen:** Many small nations – including our colleagues in the South – were frustrated by our back-room deals and strong-arm tactics at the UN climate conference, threatening developing countries, and not requiring major polluters to make emissions cuts (Will Weissert, *Huffington Post*, 12/21/09)

* **Venezuela and Drones:** President Hugo Chavez reported (12/20) on TV's "Alo Presidente," that unmanned aerial vehicles have illegally entered Venezuela's airspace in the State of Zulia, bordering Colombia. Chavez gave the order to shoot down any drones (David Cancel, *www.Bloomberg.com*, 12/20). On 1/8 a US P-3 combat plane from the US base in Curacao violated Venezuelan air space. Two Venezuelan F-16s escorted it away. The Pentagon denied the report. Also, several days earlier, Venezuelan Vice President, Ramon Gonzalez, reported another US military plane from Curacao.

* **The Fourth Fleet,** reactivated in 2008, is perceived by a majority of nations in Latin America as a direct threat to regional sovereignty. They now have "established a Defense Council to deal with external threats" (Eva Gollinger, *Global Research*, 12/20).

* **Dole Food Co. and Chichita Brands International** paid the Colombian army's paramilitary AUC to provide "protection," including murder of trade unionists, according to demobilized paramilitary Jose Gregorio Mongones on 12/6/09, in the current civil lawsuit filed by family members

of the victims (NACLA, Juan Smith, 12/14/09).

* **The US and Colombia** in July concluded a secret deal to permit US use of seven military bases in Colombia. Also, in April 2009, the US Air Mobility Command agreed to enlarge the Palanquero base in Colombia to become a "cooperative security location" that can cover half the continent with a C-17 military transport without refueling (Noam Chomsky, Task Force on the Americas Report, Fall 09). Panama has ceded four aero-naval bases to the US, one close to Colombia. (Professor Marco Gandasequi, U Panama in ALA-IAMLATINA, 4/11/09)

* **Militarization of the Mexico-US border** is increasing. In the northern border state of Coahuila, incoming mayors recently ratified the continuation of former military officers to head police departments in five municipalities (Center for International Policy, Americas Program, Kent Patterson, 1/6/10).

THE PEOPLES' RESISTANCE AND THE POWERS' REPRESSION

US militarization of this continent is increasing. We know it is not simply because of "the drug war" or "the war on terror." It appears to be for US corporate/economic control – a preservation of the Monroe Doctrine, labeled as the neoliberal economic system. And at a time when the grassroots in Latin America favor, instead, a shift to increasing self-sufficiency, nationalism, regional organizing, increasing social programs and decreasing privatization.

For two decades we - as a movement – have worked in solidarity with the people of Latin America to RESIST corporate globalization/neoliberalism. And we have marched all over the US to stop REPRESSION. However, both RESISTANCE and REPRESSION persist.

RESISTANCE

Readers are aware that for several years Latin Americans have been electing presidents who are liberal, progressive, and independent of US domination. All of them have been elected democratically in Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and now Uruguay, running on platforms opposed to corporate globalization/neoliberalism and favoring the peoples' rights to their own natural resources. For example:

* "Bolivia's first indigenous leader, President Evo Morales, easily won (63%) his second five-year term, solidifying the revolution he promises for the country's long-oppressed indigenous majority..." (Christian Science Monitor, 12/20/09)

* "President Rafael Correa, elected in 2006, and re-elected in 2009 under the new constitution, is leading Ecuador through what he calls a new 'revolution.'" (Ronn Pineo, Upside Down World, 12/24/09)

* Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, still being demonized by our State Department and media, has been freely and fairly elected twice, has nationalized the oil industry, and increased health and education for the poor majority.

* Previous issues of INTERCONNECT (see www.interconn.org) have included a continuing series of other forms of resistance to neoliberalism, such as the South American trading bloc ALBA, and UNASUR (Union of South American Republics) for regional cooperation.

* Uruguay. On 11/30/09 José "El Pepe" Mujica, a 74-year-old charismatic former rebel leader, won the run-off election for President. He ran for the ruling Broad Front with the backing of President Tabare Vasquez. He's popular with the young and the poor and promises to nudge the country leftwards. During Uruguay's conservative military dictatorship (1873-85) he served 14 years in prison for work with the Tupamaros guerilla movement (Guardian News Service 10.25.09) "His election is being seen as an expression of the desire for leftwing continuity." (Candace Pieeppte, BBC News, Montevideo, 11/30/09).

REPRESSION

The US role in repressing any challenge to corporate globalization by "leftist" governments is well known: ridding Guatemala of President Arbenz in 1954, and Chile of President Allende in 1973, the suspicious death in 1961 of Panama's President Trujillos and the US invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, the wars of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, the US invasion of Panama and Grenada, the US role in the military coups in Haiti and suspicious signs of involvement in the Honduras military coup (see INTERCONNECT News Alerts at www.interconn.org).

Honduras Most reports of the military coup in our corporate media have been misleading, although occasionally truth comes through. For example, the New Yorker's article, "An Old-Fashioned Coup," by William Finnegan (excerpted here. See the full article in the 11/30/09 issue).



* "There were deaths, disappearances, and mass detentions. Still, the protests went on. (President) Zelaya may have lost the support of the country's traditional institutions, but he gained a large following among teachers, labor unions, and peasant organizations...His policies were not the issue; democracy was.

* "Signals from Washington were mixed. Congressional conservatives rallied around the coup leaders, who...spent at least six hundred thousand dollars on Washington lobbyists...(Lanny Davis, the former Clinton White House special

counsel, and his firm pocketed much of that). By early October, nine Congressional Republicans had visited Honduras...supporting Micheletti's de facto regime.

* "Zelaya sneaked back into Honduras, concealed in a vehicle...with his wife at the Brazilian Embassy...Thousands flocked (there)...were beaten and dispersed by soldiers and riot police...The US was officially aghast. But the US representative to the OAS called Zelaya's return 'irresponsible and foolish.'

* "Four days after the accord was signed, (Assistant Secretary of State) Thomas Shannon jolted Honduras and much of Latin America, by suggesting on 'CNN en Espanol' that even if Zelaya were not restored to the Presidency, the US would recognize the results of the November elections... Zelaya pronounced the accord 'dead.' It looked as if an old-fashioned coup could still succeed in Latin America after all."

Paraguay In the fall of 2009, after the military coup in Honduras, there was fear that other leftist presidents might be overthrown. Apparently the former "Bishop of the Poor," President Fernando Lugo of Paraguay, was afraid of such an event. (NY Times 11/5/09). [Ed. note: He replaced many military leaders and – as this newsletter goes to print – we have not been aware of any coup activity since.]

Ecuador The Cuban press (GRAMMA, 1/5/10) states: "President Correa reported today "discovery of a conspiracy aimed at destabilizing the government and preparing the floor for a coup d'etat," and that "conspirators have been receiving help not just from the US government but from US right-wing organizations."



Cuba An article published in the New York Times (12/12/09), by Eva Golinger, revealed the detention of a US government contract employee in Havana this past December 5th. The employee, whose name has not yet been disclosed, works for Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), one of the largest US government contractors providing services to the State Department, the Pentagon and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The employee was detained while distributing cellular telephones, computers and other communications equipment to Cuban dissident and counterrevolutionary groups that work to promote US agenda on the Caribbean island.

Last year, the US Congress approved \$40 million to "promote transition to democracy" in Cuba. DAI was awarded the main contract, "The Cuba Democracy and Contingency Planning Program", with oversight by State and USAID (www.chavezcode.com/2009/12/cia-agent-captured-in-cuba-employee-of.html).

WHAT CAN WE DO?

From Global Trade Watch:

"The spectacular 1999 protests of the WTO in Seattle stopped a plan for massive WTO expansion...a decade later the question is whether the Obama administration will lead an effort to modernize the rules of the global economy...153 member countries remain bound to a full complement of neoliberal policies...extreme poverty in poor countries has increased...so has hunger. Corporate interests are putting enormous pressure on Obama to continue the failed model.

"On the other hand: in Congress the Trade Act (HR) calls for renegotiation of the WTO, NAFTA and CAFTA. "Global justice activists worldwide have turned to permanent campaigning at home to make their governments better represent their interests."

(Lori Wallach, Director of Global Trade Watch, Public Citizen, excerpted from the Nation, 12/21-28/09).

[Ed. note: "Permanent campaigning" as a strategy for our movement?]

An ongoing education/action campaign, and not just for the crises but the goal might be – over time – to get the public, our representatives and the administration to raise our level of understanding of the people of Latin America. And, why don't we go for the soft underbelly of neoliberalism – IMF rules of "structural adjustment."

We believe the majority of Americans – when polled with objectively-worded questions – are opposed to:

- Extreme, unfettered capitalism;
- Exporting jobs to cheap labor areas;
- Really cheap labor itself;
- Free trade agreements – especially NAFTA;
- Extreme privatization;
- Corporate domination;
- Undemocratic aspects of the World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organization (WTO).

AND A WARNING

Prepare for the FBI

by Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr.

Coming off the great success of the 20th unlicensed Friendship Caravan to Cuba, we want to thank all of you for your support...

We want also to notify all of our network that...before my return to the office, the FBI had visited the IFCO/Pastors for Peace office...[Also] that Ignacio Meneses of the US/Cuba Labor Exchange, who travelled to Cuba along with the Venceremos Brigade, recently received a visit by the FBI at his home. Because now two persons who travelled to Cuba in August have received visits from the FBI, we thought it would be appropriate to share the information that we sent out to the Caravanistas on August 18th, 2009, with our whole network.

We want to inform you that the IFCO/Pastors for Peace of-

office received a "visit" from two FBI agents only one day after the Mexico/US border crossing. On Aug 4th agents arrived saying that they were doing "community outreach" and stopped by our office to chat and talk with us. They directly asked if they could come in and talk with us. Of course, we followed the same advice we give everybody who travels with us. We said, "No, you cannot come in." We asked for their address and promised to have our attorney write to them. Our staff then immediately sat down, wrote a statement to describe in detail exactly what had transpired, who said what- every detail. We did this while the visit was fresh in our memories. These statements/affidavits are in the hands of our attorney.

During orientation and the "reentry meeting" all the Caravanistas were told that the FBI might visit them, or their friends, family or co-workers. You are under no obligation to talk with the FBI or let them into your home or workplace. We advise you to get their contact information and let them know that your attorney will be in touch with them.

A copy of the booklet "When an Agent Knocks," published by the Center for Constitutional Rights is attached. It is also important to let IFCO know immediately if you have been visited by the FBI- and to always make sure to get the cards and badge numbers of any officers that may visit you. Most of all we must remember not to talk to the FBI or let them into our homes. Also if any of you have ever received a letter from OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control), don't answer the letter. Instead, immediately make a copy of the letter and the front and back of the envelope and send it to IFCO. We will inform you on how to proceed from this point.

[The author is Director, IFCO/Pastors for Peace.]

Save the date: Detroit June 22-26

What: The US Social Forum (USSF)
Where: Cobo Hall and Hart Plaza downtown and the Wayne State University downtown campus.
Objectives: Strategizing for our movements
Networking with folks from all over the US.
Helping the LASC plan Latin America workshops
Contact: Maureen Taylor or William Copeland, 877-515-USSF
Register: See website (<http://www.ussf2010.org/>)
How to Help: Call Chuck Kaufman at the Alliance for Global Justice, 202-256-8032, or Alexis Stoumbelis at CISPES, alexis@cispes.org.

The ACLU's Know Your Rights booklet (www.aclu.org) provides effective and useful guidance addressing what rights you have when you are stopped, questioned, arrested, or searched by law enforcement officers, including a section covering what can happen to you at airports and other points of entry into the United States.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Democracy in Latin America vs US policy

by Mark Weisbrot

[This first appeared in Fohla de São Paulo, 11/28/09]

Over the last decade an epoch-making political change has taken place in the Western Hemisphere: Latin America, a region that was once considered the United States' "back yard," is now more independent of Washington than Europe is.

But while Latin America has changed, U.S. foreign policy has not – even now, with the election of President Obama. Hence the region, including Brazil, finds itself increasingly at odds with Washington. The military coup in Honduras is just one recent and glaring example.

The elected president is kidnapped at gunpoint and flown out of the country; his supporters are arrested by the thousands, beaten, tortured, and some even killed by security forces; media outlets opposing the coup are intermittently shut down, their equipment confiscated. Despite widespread condemnation of these crimes from human rights groups worldwide, the coup regime now tries to legitimate itself with an "election." Almost every country in Latin America says no, we must first restore democracy, civil liberties, and basic human rights; Washington supports the "election."

It is not only on the question of democracy that Washington finds itself on the wrong side of history. It has also gotten the economics wrong. From 1960-1980, when according to Washington folklore the region's governments couldn't do anything right, the average Latin American's income grew by 82 percent. From 1980- 2009, a much longer period filled with Washington-sponsored neoliberal reforms, it grew by about 18 percent. No wonder that most of the electorate in the region has voted over the last decade to reject neoliberal policies. It is little comfort that the U.S.-based authors of failed policies in Latin America have now managed to tank the U.S. economy as well.

It is enough to just mention Washington's "war on drugs" in the hemisphere as another colossal failure that has trampled on the sovereignty of various nations. The Obama administration now continues the Bush policy of punishing Bolivia with trade sanctions for dubious "offenses." As for security policy, the Obama administration's decision to expand its military presence in Colombia, once again in opposition to almost every government in South America, has made Washington into more of a destabilizing force in the region.

Brazil cannot afford to sit on the sidelines while the United States causes trouble in Latin America – most menacingly in the case of Honduras, threatening to push the region back to an uglier era when the military could overthrow elected governments that Washington and the local elite did not like. As for policy outside the region, Brazil's interest in

reaching out to all parties in the Middle East will be more than welcome there, as well as throughout the world. Brazil has advantages that could enable it to play a positive role: Lula is one of the most popular leaders in the world, the government has a skilled diplomatic corps, and Brazil has no conflicts of interest that would prevent it from being an honest mediator.

Lula's Brazil has politely but firmly rejected the United States' policies on a number of important issues, including the proposed "Free Trade Area of the Americas;" Washington's attempt to ram through a bad deal for developing countries at the 2003 WTO negotiations; and the Bush Administration's failed attempt to isolate Venezuela in the region. On all of these issues and more, Brazil turned out to be correct, and needed. With no major changes in U.S. foreign policy or international commercial policy on the horizon, an independent and assertive Brazilian foreign policy is likely to be more important than ever.

[The author is co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in Washington, D.C. He is also president of Just Foreign Policy.]

U.S. – Canada Delegation Condemns Human Rights Situation in Haiti

[Ed. note: In late December the LASC (Latin America Solidarity Coalition) sent its first delegation to Haiti to clarify the situation there. LASC members issued the following Press Release on 1/4/10. The delegation returned before the earthquake.]

The Latin American Solidarity Coalition from the United States, and the Canada Haiti Action Network wish to express our grave concern about human rights in Haiti.

Our delegation came to investigate human rights violations and, in particular, violations by the United Nations' MINUSTAH forces. We will send a report of our delegation's findings to the United Nations, to the United States Congress, to President Barack Obama, to the Canadian government, and to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. We will also circulate our findings to the media.

From December 28th to January 3rd our delegation collected testimony from 71 residents of Port-au-Prince, Cité Soleil, Bel Air, and Petionville.

We have learned of MINUSTAH attacks and assaults, including sexual assaults. The most serious of these occurred in Cité Soleil and in Bel Air. The attacks have resulted in injury and death, with no compensation for the victims or their families. Our report will urge the United Nations' General Assembly to investigate MINUSTAH attacks, and to arrange both financial compensation and medical aid to victims and survivors.

We have further learned of the exclusion of political parties from the April 2009 and upcoming February 2010 elections. We are particularly concerned that the Provisional Electoral

Council, handpicked by President Rene Preval, has arbitrarily excluded Fanmi Lavalas, the most popular political party in Haiti. Our report will urge the governments of the United States and Canada to stop their funding of the February 2010 election, and to send no election observers, as observation might thereby legitimize the election.

We have learned as well about severe problems in the judicial and prison system. Prison conditions in Haiti are unconscionable. Furthermore, prisoners often spend months or years in custody without charges. This violates the Haitian constitution. Our report will express particular concern with the case of Ronald Dauphin, who has yet to receive a proper hearing after years in prison. Our report will also call on the Canadian and United States governments to urge Haiti to launch a formal and public inquiry into the disappearance of political activist Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine.

We have heard from broad sectors of Haitian society about their terrible economic situation. Access to a living wage remains a concern for the majority of the Haitian people.

Industrial workers face waves of layoffs through privatization. These include employees at the Port, the sanitation sector, and Teleco. Our report will urge our respective governments to encourage investment in Haiti that offers a living wage.

In the informal sector, vendors and merchants face threats to their livelihood. This pressure comes from both government policies designed to favour large merchants, as well as criminal attacks on their inventory. Peasants and farmers in rural areas similarly report that they receive no help from the government.

We have especially heard that the people in Haiti feel that conditions in their country have grown worse since the 2004 coup against President Jean Bertrand Aristide. People have seen little benefit of aid promised to Haitian society by the international community but channeled ineffectively through non-governmental organizations. Our report will urge our governments to launch formal investigations of their aid to Haiti.

Above all, our delegation discovered that the Haitian people believe that their government neglects them and ignores their demands. The main demand we heard was for the immediate return of President Jean Bertrand Aristide. Our report will urge the Canadian and American governments to put immediate pressure on the government of Haiti to send a passport to President Aristide, who remains in exile in South Africa five years after the 2004 coup sponsored by the United States, Canada, and France.

[Ed. note: On 1/7 two members of the delegation – Chuck Kaufman and James Jordan – were detained on arrival in the US. Two agents from Homeland Security called Jordan off the plane in Miami, detained him, and interrogated him for almost four hours about his previous work with farmers and political prisoners in Colombia. Everything he had was

searched, photographed, and scanned. At Kennedy Airport on the same date Kaufman was detained, bags searched, and he was questioned for three hours about his relationship to Jordan, causing him to miss his connection. Both have complained to the government.]

From the Literature: Bolivia's Next Steps

by Ben Dangl

(excerpted from the Nation, 12/16/09, with permission.)

"During Morales's first four years in office, various indigenous, farmer and workers movements were pivotal in defeating right-wing destabilization efforts, passing land reform legislation, radicalizing government policy and ushering in a new progressive Constitution. At the same time,



defending the MAS against the oligarchy and right wing often took precedence over self-criticism and internal debate; those who seriously questioned the MAS were sometimes labeled allies of the right and sidelined.

"Perhaps more significant, the landslide victory and two-thirds majority in Congress will allow the MAS to pass new legislation that had regularly been blocked by the right during Morales's first term. The MAS has promised to pass 100 new laws ...

"...Other policy initiatives include securing more state control over natural resource development and exploitation and directly redistributing the wealth from nationalized gas reserves to impoverished sectors of the population through such programs as stipends to students, mothers and the elderly.

"But the implications of Morales's re-election can't be overstated, particularly given the current political climate in Latin America and the cooling of US-Latin American relations under the Obama administration. With the October 30 signing of a deal to establish seven new US military bases in Colombia and Washington's devastating role in the coup and electoral farce in Honduras, the re-election of Morales is a signal that the leftward shift that has characterized the past decade in Latin America is unlikely to dissipate anytime soon. Morales's re-election bolsters the left alliance in South America--a group that includes Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and the more moderate leaders in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay--which, in turn, strengthens the pushback against the Washington Consensus and US military aims in the region..."

Careless Nation

Commentary By Malcolm Bell

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the irresponsible willfulness of a privileged couple named Tom and Daisy Buchanan brings violent death to three other people. Fitzgerald concludes, "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy -- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made." How often has Uncle Sam done the same?

Violent Interventions: In an instance prominent perhaps because it has blown back to hurt us, the CIA helped local Afghan fighters in the 1970s and 1980s to throw the Soviet occupiers out of Afghanistan; then the U.S. walked away from the mess, thus allowing the Taliban to burgeon. Far less noticed by our media (surprise!) have been the messes that U.S. violent interventions in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and other Latin American nations have helped to create but that the U.S. walked away from with indifference and apparent impunity. Dare I suggest that the United States owes these nations a Marshall Plan or something like it? The original Marshall Plan proved profitable for U.S. business. Such a plan for nations that the U.S. has helped to devastate would be honorable and perhaps profitable. The alternative may be new cycles of repression, revolt, and U.S. intervention.

Torture: We occasionally hear about therapeutic treatment for U.S. troops in whom the violence in Iraq and Afghanistan has produced posttraumatic stress disorder. But our officials and media seem oblivious that our government owes similar treatment to the thousands of people whom U.S. personnel have tortured in Iraq, Afghanistan, Gitmo, and our partner nations in the renditions program and also to the many thousands of survivors throughout Latin America whom U.S. personnel have been complicit in torturing. PTSD is often a lifelong affliction for both battle survivors and torture survivors. Dr. Mary Fabri, a therapist who treats survivors of torture at the Kovler Center in Chicago, deplors the term PTSD because there is nothing "post" about it -- the trauma rages on inside the survivor -- and because it's not a "disorder" but a normal response to horrific events. By conservative estimates, some 500,000 survivors of torture reside in the United States; and the U.S. was surely complicit in torturing many thousands of them. If our nation is to restore its honor, it will offer treatment to these people. Shall we mention this obligation to our elected representatives?

[The author is a member of the board of directors of the International Mayan League/USA and of VAMOS (Vermont Associates for Mexican Opportunity and Support. He also is a contributing editor of INTERCONNECT.]

¡PRESENTE! Dennis Brutus
anti-apartheid and human rights activist and poet, who
died 12/28/09 at age 85.

- * Poet and anti-apartheid campaigner
- * In cell next to Nelson Mandela from 1964 to 1965
- * Instrumental in achieving the apartheid regime's expulsion from the 1968 Mexican Olympics and then in 1970 from the Olympic movement.
- * Defeated high-profile efforts by the Reagan administration to deport him in the 1980s.
- * Helped the Latin America solidarity movement during 1980's and 90's.
- * In Venezuela for the eighth meeting of the Network of Intellectuals and Artists in Defence of Humanity and the World Forum for Alternatives, October 18, 2008. His poem delivered at the closing session:

There will come a time
There will come a time we believe
When the shape of the planet
and the divisions of the land
Will be less important;
We will be caught in a glow of friendship
a red star of hope
will illuminate our lives
A star of hope
A star of joy
A star of freedom

RESOURCES

Major Events

- 3/20 Peace march in DC – Latin America solidarity contingent (AN SWER Coalition, 202-544-9355)
- 4/19-22 Conference on Climate Change (“Rights of Mother Earth”), Cochabamba, Bolivia
- 6/22-26 Detroit. U.S. Social Forum (Detroitinfo@ussf2010.org).

Campaigns

- * Help pass the Trade Act – progressive trade bills HR 3012 (Rep. Michael Michaud, D- ME) and S. 2821 (Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-OH).
- * Cuba: On April 13, 2009, President Obama took a small first step to change US-Cuba policy by lifting travel restrictions for Cuban-Americans. Stronger measures for reconciliation and normalized relations are essential.
 - o Take Cuba off the list of nations considered ‘state sponsors of terrorism.’
 - o Allow Cuba to buy hurricane reconstruction supplies from US companies.
 - o Release the five Cubans held in US supermax prisons for more than 11 years for the simple reason that they uncovered US-supported terrorist plans to attack Cuba.
 - o Cut the USAID budget for ‘assistance to a free Cuba.’ This is an allocation of more than \$50 million per year to undermine the sovereign government of Cuba.
 - o Open dialogue with Cuba on any of a number of issues: immigration, cooperation on drug interdiction and human trafficking, port security, medical research, etc.

For background information contact IFCO (www.ifco.org) or the LAWG (www.lawg.org).

- * The Jubilee Act for Debt Relief for Poor Countries: HR 4405 (Rep.

Maxine Waters, D-CA) with bi-partisan support. The global Jubilee movement has succeeded in getting 100% debt cancellation in 26 countries (Alliance for Global Justice (above), and Jubilee USA, www.jubileeusa.org).

- * Close the SOA: HR 2567. This legislation would suspend operations at the SOA/ WHINSEC, investigate torture manuals and human rights abuses associated with the school, and conduct an assessment of military training in Latin America. Ask your Representative to co-sponsor. For help with a campaign call SOAW at 202-234-3440.

- * Continental Campaign on Military Bases. Stop the US plan to add troops to seven Colombian bases – opposed by the Dec. 1-2 Conference of Latin American Nations in Buenos Aires (Fellowship of Reconciliation – Latin America www.forusa.org).

- * Stop the killings and environmental poisoning by the mining corporations.

- o Drop the lawsuit by Pacific Rim, Inc. in El Salvador (Rights Action, www.rightsaction.org).

- o Close Blackfire (Blackfire Exploration, Ltd) barite mines in Chiapas.

- * Update on El Salvador's Anti-Mining Campaign: On 1/13 President Mauricio Funes said, “My government will not authorize any mining extraction projects” and he committed to a full investigation of mining opponents' murders. (www.cispes.org).

Book

Hoodwinked: An Economic Hit Man Reveals Why the World Financial Markets Imploded--and What We Need to Do to Remake Them, by John Perkins (author of Confessions of an Economic Hitman). Random House, 2009.

Speakers

“Creative Non-violence. Resistance in Colombia.” Bay Area February tour (www.FORColombia.org).

Travel

Border: 4/23-26 (GX Beyond the Borders, immigration, labor, environment); 9/3-6 (GX, as above).

Cuba: 2/9-28 (GX, architecture, urban development); 3/1-10 (GX, health care, alternative healing); 3/26-4/4 (GX, public education); 4/2-11 (GX, renewable energy); 4/23-5/2 (GX, labor, health, May Day in Cuba); 5/5-15 (GX, agriculture, forestry, urban gardens); 6/1-10 (GX, health care, alternative healing); 6/20-30 (GX, public education); 7/2-12 (GX Fiesta del Fuego).

Dominican Republic: 5/26-6/6 (GX, cocoa harvest).

Ecuador: 7/3-12 (GX, socio-environmental justice).

El Salvador: 3/1-10 (GATE, cultural immersion, spirituality of solidarity); 3/19-26 (SOAW, Oscar Romero Legacy: land of martyrs, with Father Roy Bourgeois); 3/19-28 (CGE, Romero: 30 years a martyr); 6/13-22 (GATE, cultural immersion); 6/19-27 (CISPES, Radical Roots Delegation, specifically tailored for Salvadoran and Salvadoran-American young adults over the age of 18); 8/6-16 (GATE, cultural immersion).

Guatemala: 3/25-4/4 (GATE, Holy Week); 5/23-6/6 (CGE, environmental justice, sustainable development); 6/20-28 (GX, Fair vs. Free Trade); 7/10-18 (CGE, education for decolonization); 7/24-8/1 (CGE, when indigenous people lead).

Honduras: 4/3-13 (WFP, peace);

Mexico: 3/17-25 (GX, Chiapas, indigenous, land rights, biodiversity); 5/19-29 (GATE, Chiapas, cultural immersion); 8/4-12 (GX, Chiapas, as above); 10/26-11/3 (GX, Oaxaca/Day of the Dead).

Nicaragua: 2/18-26 (CGE, poetry and politics, a literary tour); 7/10-19 (GX, Fair Trade, alternatives).

Peru: 5/31-6/12 (GX, Beyond the land of the Incas); 6/2-22 (GX, Not for Sale advocacy – human trafficking).

Venezuela: 4/9-18 (Task For the Americas with GX and SOAW. Learn about ALBA, a new economic model); 5/22-6/1 (GX, community organizing/Bolivarian Revolution); 6/19-29 (GX, Afro-Venezuelan Cultural Festival); 8/14-24 (GX, a new vision for the Americas).

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, 773-277-0253, www.cpt.org.

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

Haiti: A devastating 7.0 earthquake hit Haiti on 1/12/10 – the first large earthquake in 240 years. On Day 3 Cuba had 30 medical doctors there (plus 400 who already were working there) and had opened a field hospital at the site of the one destroyed in Port au Prince (David Lindorff, 1/5 Common Dreams). On 1/15 Janet Napolitano, Director of Homeland Security, announced Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian refugees.

Venezuela: (a) On 1/9 the Cuban newspaper “GRANMA” reported that the National Institute of Statistics finds poverty down 3/3% this year. Daily lunches are provided to 4 million children. (b) The Counsel General, Jorge Velos, announced the donation of 4,000 energy-efficient light bulbs to the people of Jackson, Mississippi. (c) President Chavez has announced that 225,000 barrels of oil have been sent to devastated Haiti; and that all the gasoline and diesel fuel that they need will be sent.

El Salvador: After years of struggle, the Oscar Romero University in El Salvador is going through a rebirth. The new government of Mauricio Funes has taken a courageous stand to support a new, independent university administration - one committed to Romero’s vision of the preferential option for the poor (1/23, Peace International, peace.int@verizon.net).

United States: On 1/25 federal trials begin for four human rights advocates arrested for nonviolent civil disobedience in carrying the 11/19-21 protest against the School of the Americas/ Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation onto the Fort Benning military base in Georgia. Each defendant faces up to six months in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Their demand: A change in U.S.-Latin America foreign policy and the closure of the School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC).

Mexico: (a) Ciudad Juarez, city of femicides, documented 2700 killings in 2009 and is called the world’s most violent city. (b) The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras” (CJM) is 20 years old.

Bolivia: The Obama administration cancelled Bolivia’s trade preferences after Bolivia expelled our Drug Enforcement Administration and some USAID staff for “spying and plotting with the oligarchy.” Growth in GDP will be the highest in Latin America.

El Salvador: (a) Recently declassified US intelligence documents, handed over to the Spanish courts, show that the US State Department, the CIA and Spanish intelligence knew in advance of the 1989 assassination of the Jesuit priests (Cuba News GRANMA). (b) CRISPAZ (Christians for Peace in El Salvador) is 25 years old.

Colombia: Congratulations to Peace Brigades International for 15 years of courageous accompaniment. .

Thank You

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