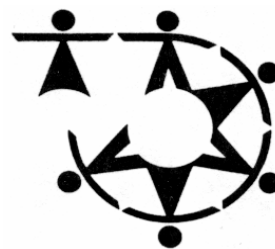


THE

MUSTARD SEED



Denver Justice & Peace Committee

Celebrating 27 years of peace and justice!

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December 2006 • Volume 27 • Number 4

Letter to the Editor: The Wall is no Solution

By María Soledad Cervantes-Ramírez, November 15, 2006

I happen to be Mexican, and was encouraged to write to provide your readers with a different point of view about a set of issues that are having a terrible effect on relations between our nations. I refer, specifically, to the Wall that the U.S. government intends to build (is building even as I write) all along its southern border, to prevent illegal aliens, especially Mexicans, from entering your country seeking a better life for themselves and their families. I am a trained translator and work for a law firm located on Paseo de la Reforma, very near the American Embassy. I have witnessed all manner of sit-ins and anti-American sentiment. As a result, I cannot help but consider how the construction of this new obstacle is already aggravating our relations and will continue to do so with the passage of time.

Given events since 2000, the continued election of neo-conservatives, the invasion of Iraq, the economic strategies being applied worldwide under the name of globalization, I would like to speak out. I recently read a most excellent and informative book, *The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time*, by Antonia Juhasz, an expert in foreign trade. The core of the book is simple: After World War II, three financial institutions—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and what was to become the World Trade Organization (WTO)—were created supposedly to equalize the economies of countries around the world. Instead, they have been put to uses never envisioned by their creators. Since the Reagan years, their strictly conditioned loans have been used to open the doors of needy countries to huge multinationals such as Halliburton, Chevron, Bechtel and Lockheed Martin, wreaking havoc on these countries' economies and provoking precisely what the institutions claim to try to avoid—extreme impoverishment of developing nations' populations. Among these, I will mention only my own country. Of course, President-elect Calderón is obliged to combat poverty, raise salaries decent level, and create all the jobs that Vicente Fox failed to create in his six years of his government.

Today's headline states that more than 25 million Mexicans are nearing starvation. Can it be a sin then to seek a better life outside of a country where jobs are not provided, where salaries are so low that the common family cannot survive? What makes it so? I believe it's because Mexico has been obedient to the IMF's, WTO's and WB's dictums for so long without demanding from the multinationals, which entered our nation through their loan mechanisms, even a minimum loyalty toward local populations. A case I personally know of was that of a corporation in Texas with a *maquiladora* in our country. Overnight, they transferred their operations to China and left all their Mexican workers jobless.

As a person who loves her country, I beseech your readers to consider their own history: Over time, weaker nations have been occupied, either physically or economically, by the United States. Maybe your readers would want to consider whether "compassionate conservative" isn't a contradiction in terms; why when the government touts freedom of expression, journalist Gregg Palast cannot work in his own country; why the neo-cons pretend to defend democracy but practice plutocracy; why U.S. citizens are continually made to fear some enemy or other, some aggression or other. On the other hand it seems to me your country needs Mexican labor. Why not be truly *compassionate*? Why not follow *true American values*, and let the poor survive? The Wall is no solution. Already *polleros*, or people smugglers, are more than doubling their quota to cross from Mexico to the U.S. Why not put *polleros* out of business through a decent immigration agreement? Impoverished Mexican workers are not the Enemy. They're not interested in a *reconquista* of *Aztlán*. All they seek is to survive.

With utmost respect,
María Soledad Cervantes-Ramírez
Mexico City, Mexico

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Denver Justice and Peace Committee is a volunteer organization dedicated to promoting human rights, economic justice and lasting peace in Latin America through education, solidarity projects and nonviolent activism.

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Denise Peine
Margie Thompson

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Thanks to everyone who continues to help out in the office, with program development, fundraising, newsletter publication, mailings and website. We couldn't do it without you!

Message From the Board

A SPECIAL YEAR

This has been a special year for our peace and justice community. The Board of Directors began 2006 confronting a very challenging reconsideration and streamlining of our organizational structure. While individual board members deserve much credit for their dedicated and patient service, I speak for them when I say that we have been humbled and uplifted by the strong and visionary volunteer efforts of many of our members. They stepped up not only to provide financial backing but, in addition, to volunteer precious time and talent moving DJPC to a new realm of functionality.

First to step forward were dedicated members of our Guatemala advocacy component, CAMINOS. By taking the oars with special committee assignments and event responsibilities, they undergirded our overall effort and provided a real sense of movement—and fun! A number of long-time DJPC/CAMINOS members teamed up with former board members and some of our new and dynamic members to supply visionary input and energy to realign and fortify program efforts.

As a result, we benefit from stronger and more effective CAMINOS and Legislative Advocacy programs. We welcome the initiative that created the Salon Evening Discussions, which embarked in September. We anticipate a comprehensive analysis of the situation in Guatemala from members of the study delegation who will be traveling there in February. While we made the decision not to continue teaching the Global Solutions to Violence classes ourselves, we look forward to launching the curriculum on our website early next year. All of these efforts exemplify membership involvement.

We cannot enter the realm of gratitude without acknowledging the exceptional work of our interns. The significance of young and vibrant energy amongst so many “old salts,” especially to the functioning of our office and the coordination of our events, cannot be overestimated.

Even with these many dynamic components, we would not be sure of our direction without our captain. Kara Martinez has sized up her role as Director of Program Services and stepped into it with dimension and vision. She has moved beyond directing the course of one nonprofit peace and justice program to becoming a real leader in the Denver community.

I personally am privileged to be working within such a fabulous community effort. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you and salute you all.

Richard Kruch
Board Member

DJPC New Volunteer Orientation!

Volunteers are the foundation of DJPC.

Orientation is an opportunity to learn more about the history of DJPC and our present activities. Members from our programs and committees describe their work with DJPC and present on various volunteer positions. There is something to fit into every schedule! Orientation is also a chance to get acquainted with DJPC and meet other members of our community.

Please join us!

Saturday January 17th

**DJPC Office
901 W 14th Avenue, Suite 7**

9:00-11:30 AM

**RSVP: January 13th
Call: 303.623.1463 or e-mail
djpc@denjustpeace.org**

A DJPC Holiday Wish List...

For our Library:

Subscriptions to
periodicals like
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Educational DVDs
movies and
documentaries that
assist us in our mission.

Books

Latin American topics,
advocacy, fair trade,
globalization, genocide,
nonviolence, peace &
justice, fundraising, etc.

Printer Cartridges

LCD Projector

Office Supplies

Call the DJPC office for more specifics!

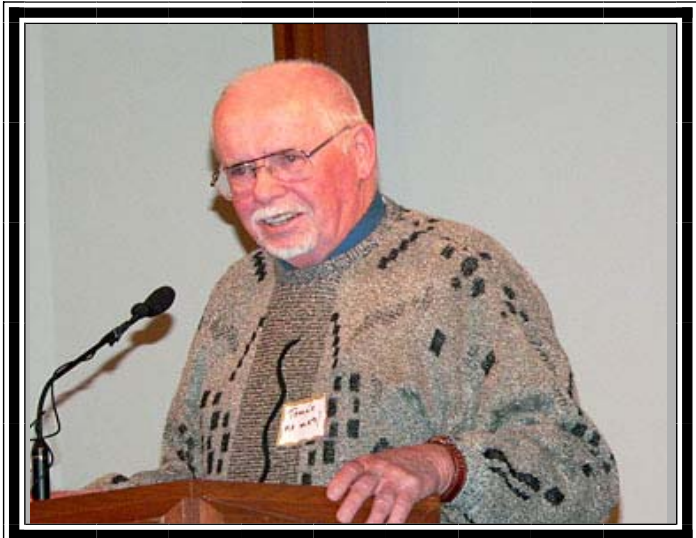
DJPC's 27th Annual Celebration

Article by Molly Klekamp
Biographies by Roxana Newton

Latin American sights, sounds, and tastes filled the evening of October 14th at DJPC's 27th Annual Celebration and Global Awards Night. The evening was punctuated with a call for peace and justice in Guatemala which remains elusive ten years after the Peace Accords were signed.

The Global Justice and Peace Award was conferred on Dr. Thomas Melville and posthumously on Father Ron Hennessey. Melville and Hennessey were recognized for their extraordinary work in Guatemala as Maryknollers. Melville is the author of *Through a Glass Darkly: The U.S. Holocaust in Central America*, which tells of Hennessey's work in Guatemala and describes in great detail Guatemala's civil war, genocide, and U.S. involvement in the conflict.

Jane Covode and Susan Cotton, co-founders of DJPC's CAMINOS program, received the John Proctor Members of the Year Award. Upon receiving the award, Jane and Susan related the work of CAMINOS over the past decade and inspired us all to recognize ourselves as members of the global community.



Global Peace Award Recipient Tom Melville during his speech

A photography exhibit by Jonathan Moller, CAMINOS committee member and acclaimed international photographer, decorated the foyer. His work depicts Guatemalans' daily struggle to survive in the face of horrific human rights violations and the loss of loved ones, whose remains are still being exhumed and identified to this day. Jonathan's moving photographs are compiled in his book, *Our Culture Is Our Resistance*. They may also be viewed at: <http://www.jonathanmoller.org>.

Another highlight of the evening was the opportunity to bid on items in our Silent Auction, which included massages, handyman services, coffee, jewelry, clothing, artwork, and *muchas otras cosas*, many of them from Latin American.

DJPC would like to extend a special thank you to our members and guests for attending and supporting our work for justice and peace!

Photos courtesy of Margie Thompson



and Global Awards Night 2006



John Proctor Award Recipients
Jane Covode and Susan Cotton after their memorable speech

Susan Cotton

Susan Cotton received her degree in Teaching English as a Second Language and moved to Costa Rica in the mid-1980's. During her time in Central America, she experienced first-hand the intensity of the political environment affecting the entire region at that time. After her teaching assignment, she traveled to Guatemala for six months. It was during a trip to an army re-education camp outside Nebaj for Mayans fleeing the destruction of their villages that Susan witnessed the incredible suffering of indigenous Maya at the hands of their own government and military. On her return to Denver, she continued to take a strong interest in Central America.

At a *Fourth Thursday* gathering at the Warner home she discovered DJPC and subsequently took part in many activist activities including the coffee boycott, the CO Rapid Response Network (CORRN) and the first Build for Peace event. In October 1996, Susan trained with the Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP) to be a human rights accompanier in

Guatemala and chose to work with the CPR-Sierra, one of the communities in resistance that had been displaced from Nebaj and surrounding areas, whose people went into hiding in order to survive the genocide. CORRN member Jane Covode was interested in continuing her work with Guatemala's refugees and its displaced populations. Together they enlisted Tommy Timm, Kathryn Rodriguez, Barbara Millman and Jeff Borg of DJPC and formed the steering committee of CAMINOS.



Jane Covode

Jane Covode has been an activist since the 1960's, when she took part in the civil rights and women's movements. In the 1970's, she began a career in nonprofit management as a consultant with the Technical Assistant Center and then directed a statewide association of agencies serving people with developmental disabilities. Jane's interest in Latin American began with Spanish lessons in Mexico and expanded into volunteering for a year at an orphanage in Colon, Mexico in 1992. She used this experience to prepare her for what would be a life changing two years as a long term volunteer with Witness for Peace (WFP).

From 1993 to 1995, Jane was a human rights accompanier to the Guatemalan Mayan refugees living in Chiapas, Mexico. The refugees had escaped the scorched earth campaign in Guatemala in the 1980's and were planning their return under an accord with the Guatemalan government. Jane accompanied two repatriations, first to Nueva Esperanza in Huehuetenango in 1994 and then to Xaman, Alta Verapaz in 1995. When she returned to Denver, she continued her commitment to indigenous rights through DJPC and the CAMINOS program.

ADVOCACY & NONVIOLENT ACTIVISM UPDATE

By Beth Peery, Advocacy and Nonviolent Activism Intern

Immigration

In September, the Secure Fence Act (HR 6061) was passed, authorizing the construction of an additional 700 miles of fencing between the U.S. and Mexico and increasing border militarization. The implementation of the Act, if spending is authorized, raises concerns surrounding a potential increase of human rights violations along the border. The Fence Act belies the shortsighted manner with which Congress is addressing the issue of immigration. Rather than addressing the root causes forcing people to flee their homelands, they are merely attempting to block immigrants from enter our country.

Economics, political oppression and the inability to provide for one's family are among the conditions forcing people to emigrate. Therefore, Congress should be questioning the implications of its foreign and trade policies on the general populations of our NAFTA/CAFTA partners. Free trade agreements prevent the development of favorable economic conditions and have been linked with increasing political tensions in these countries.

Other bills that the House passed this year also demonstrate the failure of Congress to address the root causes of immigration. The Immigration Law Enforcement Act (HR 6095) would give authority to state and local law enforcement to assist in the prosecution of alien smugglers and also reforms the litigation procedure. These Congressional actions are demonstrative of a limited focus to a problem that has resulted from a multitude of other situations that we helped to create.

Peru Free Trade Agreement

The Bush Administration has attempted to extend the free trade model to Peru through the recently debated Peru Free Trade Agreement (PFTA). The negative implications of PFTA on Peru actually exceed those of its predecessor agreements, NAFTA and CAFTA. The agreement fails to require any labor or environmental standards in Peru and actually encourages the country to lower its standards further, arguably to increase foreign investment. PFTA would lower Peru's tariffs on agricultural products making it impossible for poor farming communities in Peru to compete with subsidized agricultural products from the United States. This agreement would also prevent Peru's timely access to important life saving generic drugs because of the agreement's intellectual property provisions. Ultimately, if PFTA passes, the result will be very negative for Peru and its citizens.

Many expected the PFTA to be brought for a vote in the House during the recent lame-duck session. However, the White House has decided to postpone the vote until next year. It is speculated that this is because PFTA falls under the fast track negotiating authority. This means that Congress can only vote "yes" or "no" on the agreement as a whole without being allowed to make any amendments. The House Parliamentarian has ruled that implementing legislation for trade agreements on the fast track can only be submitted to Congress once. If PFTA failed to pass this session, the Bush Administration would have to submit it again without the fast track protection, thereby giving Congress the ability to make amendments, slow the process down, and potentially alter the agreement.

ACTIONS Taken Since September

- ◆ Urged Costa Rican Ambassador to the U.S., Francisco Tomás Dueña Leiva, to oppose ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in Costa Rica. At this writing, Costa Rica is the only signatory country whose legislature has not yet ratified the Agreement.
- ◆ Encouraged Colorado Representatives to support the Hope Act (H.R. 6142) giving trade preferences to Haiti on apparel items. The provisions of this bill were incorporated into the stop gap spending measure passed at the conclusion of the 109th Congress.
- ◆ Contacted Colorado Representatives by letter and phone to urge them not to support the Peru Free Trade Agreement.
- ◆ Requested that U.S. Ambassador John Bolton vote against Guatemala for the open rotating seat on the UN Security Council due to continued impunity and increasing violence in that country. The seat was ultimately granted to Panama as a compromise.
- ◆ Called for the Colorado delegation to reject policies that would further militarize the border, most particularly the Secure Fence Act which passed in Congress. Encouraged legislators to address the root causes of immigration in order to develop effective solutions.
- ◆ Communicated to Representatives our disapproval of Plan Colombia, which this year granted \$735 million, 80% of which was for military aid, to support Colombia in its internal conflict. Increased militarization has lent to skyrocketing human rights abuses, massacres and mass deaths of civilians, and increased repression while failing to resolve the larger conflicts among guerrilla and paramilitary forces or eradicate coca production and the drug trade.
- ◆ Expressed our disappointment to Colorado Representatives upon defeat of the McGovern-Leach Amendment, which would have redistributed \$30 million previously allocated for fumigation in Colombia to aid international refugee victims of political violence and provide emergency humanitarian relief for natural disasters around the world.
- ◆ Contacted Colorado Representatives requesting that they become signatories to the bipartisan letter circulated by Reps. Pitts and McGovern, asking for the protection of human rights defenders including union representatives, religious leaders, journalists, Afro-Colombian and indigenous community leaders, and members of national and local human rights groups.
- ◆ Sent a letter to the President Vincent Fox condemning police violence against the peaceful protestors in Oaxaca City, Mexico. Seventeen people, including U.S. journalist Brad Will, have been killed and at least 30 disappeared since the conflict began six months ago. Currently, more than 214 are being held as political prisoners in state and federal prisons.
- ◆ Expressed our disappointment at the unquestioning confirmation of Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense despite his involvement in the U.S.-funded Contra War against Nicaragua in the 1980's and his position in the CIA when Nicaraguan harbors were mined, an act ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice. Gates also lied to the Senate about his knowledge of the Iran/Contra scandal.

**We encourage all DJPC members to sign up for e-mail Action Alerts
to amplify our voice in Washington!**

The Salon Series Resumes with a Discussion of Transitional Justice and Healing in Guatemala

As we continue to understand the processes of transitional justice in healing societies that have experienced crimes against humanity, we will take a closer look at what tools are applicable and possible in the context of Guatemala. We will have the opportunity to address and discuss the following key questions, particularly as they pertain to the upcoming study delegation.

- ◆ How has Guatemala confronted its history of atrocity and genocide?
- ◆ What tools of transitional justice have been implemented there?
- ◆ How have the particularities of this society enabled or obstructed the process of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation?
- ◆ What have been the role of education, prosecutions and monuments in confronting the history of the genocide in Guatemala?
- ◆ And finally, what could be *our* role in supporting the path of transitional justice in Guatemala?

In order to address these issues, we will again be joined by Fran Sterling from Facing History and Ourselves. Fran will help facilitate the discussion of these questions by drawing on resources that illustrate other examples of transitional justice from Rwanda and South Africa. Excerpts from two documentaries, *In Rwanda We Say...The Family That Does Not Speak Dies* directed by Anne Aghion and *Facing the Truth* directed by Bill Moyers, will be used as springboards to discuss the focus questions of the evening. All are invited to take part, not just those participating in the study delegation!

Come to our second Salon evening to consider and discuss how the transitional justice process can provide healing to Guatemalan society in the aftermath of its civil war.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, JANUARY 17, 2007

6 TO 9 PM

The Mizel Museum

400 S. Kearney Street, Denver

Light refreshments will be served

**Call DJPC at 303-623-1463 to RSVP by Wednesday, January 10, 2006
and for additional information.**

Suggested donation: \$7.

Arrive early to view the museum exhibits.

Visit www.mizelmuseum.org for directions and exhibit information,

CAMINOS Update

By Roxana Newton

CAMINOS honors its ten-year commitment to promoting human rights and social justice in Guatemala. Over the past decade, CAMINOS has sponsored ten human rights companions. The need for organizations like CAMINOS continues today, both to provide accompaniment and to educate the general public on the current situation in Guatemala.

The CAMINOS committee strives to inform others that justice for the victims of the "Scorched Earth Campaign" continues to be compromised because of the deep structural issues of repression and violence that haunt Guatemala. Guatemalans still face the same issues at the root of the violence—poverty, underdevelopment and discrimination against the indigenous majority. These realities motivate CAMINOS members and underscore the importance of their mission.

Thomas Melville, the author of "Through a Glass Darkly: The U.S. Holocaust in Central America", illuminates the painful history of the thirty-six year civil war. Today Guatemala is attempting a reconciliation process that would prove difficult in any society. What is a country to do following a civil war that led to the deaths of more than 200,000 civilians, and the disappearance and torture of tens of thousands of more? How do people move on when a generation is missing?

Our tenth companion, Jordan Buckley, is currently working in Guatemala. He concluded one of his letters to his friends and family with a powerful statement:



"Still today Guatemala's genocide—one of the bloodiest civil conflicts in the modern era of the Western hemisphere—has hardly garnered our nation's sympathy and solidarity or, tragically, even penetrated our consciousness."



CAMINOS continues to dedicate its resources to raising awareness to the crimes against the people of Guatemala. As part of its education campaign, CAMINOS is excited to host the 2007 delegation to Guatemala. Delegation participants will visit the Mayan community of El Tesorito, as well as Union Victoria, Guatemala City, Lago Atitlan and Antigua. The delegation will provide a unique way to learn and actively participate with the Guatemalans at this critical time. We look forward to hearing about their experiences as well as reading about the delegation on our new blog!

See <http://coloradomaya-accompaniment.blogspot.com>. For a more detailed account of CAMINOS' work and the current situation in Guatemala, please visit www.denjustpeace.org/solidarityproj.html.

Build for Peace Fall 2006



Thank you to everyone who participated in Build for Peace this fall! Your hard work and fundraising efforts are greatly appreciated!



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Photos courtesy of Denise Peine

THE CRISIS OF DEBT

By Beth Peery

Some question why Third World countries have failed to develop. One major reason is the overwhelming debt that has accumulated to them over the past few decades. Countries struggle to break from this difficult cycle but as long as debt accrues, there is very little hope for progress. Many countries, organizations and individuals are calling for major debt cancellation throughout the developing world. The reasons for this request seem apparent, yet many nations remain hesitant to free other countries from such burdens.

An analysis of the crisis starts with an evaluation of the effects of debt on developing countries. Servicing the debt with interest payments to wealthy nations does nothing to reduce the obligation. Funds going towards debt service are not being invested in sustainable development or infrastructure. These payments cost lives as little remains to invest in clean water, housing, education or basic health care. Experts estimate that it would cost \$10-15 billion per year to reverse the AIDS crisis in Africa. Yet sub-Saharan Africa annually has to pay \$15 billion against its debt. The reallocation of funds to healthcare could greatly increase the standard of living for millions of people. In Latin America, two in five people live in poverty and millions lack access to basic needs, yet these countries are burdened by high levels of foreign debt. Additionally, harmful economic policies are imposed that limit the resources available to invest in clean water, schools, and health care or, more likely, require the privatization of these services.

Debt provokes a problematic cycle that continually forces countries further into debt. Take into consideration Filipinos who annually pay 90% of their taxes and tariffs to debt payments. Only the remaining 10% is left to spend on the nation's internal needs. Though institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) believe that this is a sustainable payment for debt service, it is impossible to believe that a country can realistically survive on the balance. Its government is forced to take out more loans to cover the shortages. If it fails to meet the payments, a contemporary form of bondage is imposed upon it by the WB and the IMF. These organizations are governed by the developed nations that underwrite them. The WB and the IMF require adherence to various structural adjustment programs, including privatizations and concessions, which remove aspects of the country's sovereignty and freedom.

Programs sponsored by the WB and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have had disastrous impacts on indigenous populations.

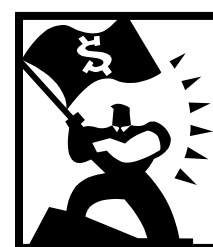
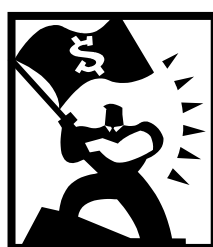
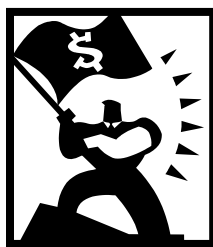
In Guatemala, the IDB is supporting the Xalala Dam project by recruiting private investors to build and own the project and government representatives to provide the concessions. The Xalala project is to be built down river from the Chixoy Dam, funded by the WB and the IDB, which resulted in the forced displacement of dozens of Mayan-Achi communities and the massacres of hundreds of Rio Negro villagers. To this day, neither the IDB nor the WB has given the affected communities due compensation or reparations.

The legitimacy of debt generated by these means is cause for concern. The developing countries often signed on to major loans under corrupt or illegitimate dictatorships. For example, in Haiti international lenders loaned millions of dollars to the two oppressive Duvalier regimes. Often the governments were pushed heavily by the lenders to take out these loans. When new and legitimate governments are elected the question remains, should they be forced to pay for the actions of the corrupt governments previously in power? The issue is complicated by the high rates of interest that are imposed to service the debt. According to the United Nations, Latin America has borrowed \$1.8 trillion since 1970, paid back \$2.1 trillion, but still owes \$730 billion to its creditors.

Many question the implications of debt relief for our country and other lending nations. The answer is minimal. The IMF sits on a gold reserve worth over \$40 billion dollars, so it would be possible to sell off this reserve and cancel most outstanding debts. But past proposals to do so have been met with great opposition from the gold industry, especially Newmont Mining Company, headquartered in Denver. Newmont claims that these sales would lower the market price of gold and refute the IMF's guarantee against such impact. Newmont has strongly lobbied U.S. Senators in opposition to gold sales, therefore preventing the IMF from utilizing its resources to cancel the debt.

Debt cancellation should be viewed as a responsibility of the international community to the governments of developing nations to improve the lives of their citizens. And it works! Honduras utilized what debt relief it received (though minimal compared to what it owes) to provide three extra years of schooling for its children. By allowing the debt crisis to continue, we condone the cycle of poverty, disable capable nations, and perpetuate unjust and exploitive systems of dependency. Is this a legacy we can afford?

For more information please visit the Jubilee Network at www.jubileeusa.org/.



Welcome to DJPC!

For those of you receiving this newsletter for the first time, we welcome your help in working for justice and peace! If you would like to become a member to keep receiving *The Mustard Seed* and support our work, please return the slip below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

I would like to become a member and continue to receive *The Mustard Seed* for \$30 per year.

I would like to become a member and contribute \$_____ to help with the work of DJPC and its CAMINOS and GSTV programs.

I would like to receive the following via email:
Events Announcements & Action Alerts

Email: _____



Denver Justice and Peace Committee

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