

THE MUSTARD SEED

Denver Justice & Peace Committee
Celebrating 30 years of peace and justice!



Denver Justice & Peace Committee
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DJPC Supports National Efforts to Close the SOA

By Angela Shugarts & Jerry Stookey

DJPC 2009 Salon Series:

*Guatemalan Accompaniers Return
Please join us every month to discuss,
participate, and take action to bring
justice to international countries in Latin
America! Mark your calendars!*

The School of the Americas military base in Ft. Benning Georgia is a counterinsurgency training school responsible for instructing Latin American soldiers in military strategies.

SOA defenders say the U.S. military "must maintain contact with Latin American militaries to increase mutual understanding and promote democratic values [and it] is key to maintaining these relationships and teaching those values," according to an SOA Watch report.

However, since 1945, the graduates of the school have been reported responsible for numerous human rights violations. Examination of their curriculum course catalogue reveals that



The SOA protest in November 2008 drew thousands of students, activists, religious leaders, and organizations to gather at the SOA gates in Ft. Benning, Georgia.

"only one in 42 courses centers on issues of democracy and human rights," which contrarily undermines and destroys democratic values.

Activists and grassroots organizations around the globe are lobbying to close the SOA to prevent further crimes against humanity in hopes of bringing solidarity and lasting peace among Latin American communities.

November Protest Advocates Change

The recent protest in November 2008 drew thousands of students, activists, religious leaders, and organizations to gather at the SOA gates in Ft. Benning, Georgia in opposition to the military tactics as well as to honor those who have died at the hands of the SOA graduates.

In the past, DJPC members have marched in the SOA protest and last year, Jerry Stookey, new director of program services

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MISSION STATEMENT

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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Thanks to all our supportive members and the volunteers who continue to work on program development, fundraising, newsletter publication, and office assistance!

Message from the DJPC Board

For over a year, I have been haunting the folks in DJPC's office, looking through files, paying bills, running accounting reports and generally scaring our otherwise indefatigable volunteers and interns. I am the Board Treasurer. It is not easy flipping back and forth between the black and white of banking and government reports, and the color of striving for justice in Latin America, community health, solidarity and education, but it is a challenge I embrace.

I have a background in Latin America that intersects business and economic justice. As a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia in the mid-70's, I counseled small entrepreneurs in bookkeeping and costing their work with the goal of growing their enterprises, employing others and becoming valued commodities in their communities. I worked with rice mills, print shops, farm co-ops and service organizations. It was always a struggle getting past the owners' initial fears that I was a secret agent of "la CIA." On a couple of occasions, I never got past that impression. As an American, it was difficult to portray myself as an agent for economic justice through education because, as Americans, we were thought to be selfish economic tyrants.

Later, I got lost in the American business system. During the last few years, I have grown sick over our role in the world and now only do *pro bono* work for causes that seek justice through action. How appropriate that we recently inaugurated a new President who promises hope through leadership and individual service. Our economic crisis pales to that of most of the world where the majority makes less than \$2 per day. We must lead by example and by service. President Obama said in his inaugural address, "To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders; nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect."

Join me in giving of your time and generosity to reach out to our brothers and sisters in Latin America and define our role as the leaders of the generation to come.

Gracias—
Steve Piper



Election Observers Head to El Salvador

By Harriet Mullaney

Denise Peine, Jack Hunt and I will be traveling to El Salvador to observe their presidential elections on Sunday, March 15. We will be working through el Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS). Jack's son Graham, a recent Regis University graduate, has been volunteering with CIS since last fall and will be leading one of the observer missions in March.

El Salvador's politics have been extremely polarized since the Peace Accords were signed 17 years ago. The right-wing ARENA party has held the presidency and controlled the majority of municipalities, and also maintained the greatest number in the Legislature (but not the majority). Municipal and legislative elections were held in January. While the left-wing FMLN Party lost control of San Salvador after 12 years of governing the capital, it experienced gains in municipalities and the Legislature. The FMLN now holds the greatest number of seats in the latter.

The January elections were clouded by the apparent migration of voters from one municipality to another, apprehension that a significant number of voters may have been transported from neighboring

countries, lack of voter secrecy due to the layout of the polling places and lack of access for the disabled. I have been an observer in the past two election cycles and know these as chronic issues. Graham Hunt led a group of observers in Cojutepeque, the capital of the Cuscatlan department. Some "suspicious activities" preceded the elections there but he felt that, in general, the election went pretty well. A personal friend of mine in San Salvador did not feel so positively about the conduct of elections in the capital.

Much is at stake in the March elections as Mauricio Funes, the FMLN candidate, has held a consistent lead in the polls. Those of us observing will undoubtedly be confronted with all the anomalies of January and more. The ARENA Party will not go lightly. Please look for our report in the next issue.

To follow election progress, visit these websites: El Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS) www.cis-elsalvador.org and The Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador www.cispes.org



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participated with a group of delegates from Regis University in Denver.

"This was my first opportunity to participate in the SOA Watch, as many DJPC members have done in the past. We know Latin Americans who have personally suffered as a result of the SOA, where their country's military received training contrary to human and international law. When you measure the consequences, country after country, it's worse than Guantanamo actually," says Jerry Stookey, director of program services for DJPC.

The SOA Watch, a nonviolent grassroots movement, "works through creative protest and resistance, [and] legislative and media work to stand in solidarity with the people of Latin America, to close the SOA/WHINSEC and to change oppressive U.S. foreign policy that institutions like the SOA represent," according to the SOA Watch website.

At the protest weekend, November 21-23, organizers advocated the importance of speaking out for change.

"We feel qualified optimism. The American people have rejected the Bush Administration's policies of aggression, war-mongering and torture. By closing this notorious school of assassins now, Obama and the new Congress can show the world that we genuinely honor human rights," says Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of SOA Watch.

"Life goes on, the death of the Jesuits and so many others, Celina and Elba, moved me to go on and not to fall into despair, tragedy...the Jesuits were men of joy-we are not condemned to spend our lives in sorrow or mourning," commented Jon Sobrino, S.J. survivor of the November 16, 1989 massacre University of Central America, El Salvador. The night of the attack, Sobrino was out of the country.

"Sobrino attended the Vigil for the first time on the 19th anniversary of the Jesuit massacre. He believes that working for the closure of the SOA is more important now than ever," reports an SOA Watch article.

Current Initiatives: Closing the SOA

With President Obama in office, it remains imperative for the SOA Watch to seize opportunities in the political process and promote their positions to the Obama administration.

"With a new administration, we should make ourselves more prominent at our nation's capital, since that is where the policy is made," says

Dolores Perez Priem, SOA Watch West.

Currently, the organization is working with other social justice advocacy groups to host a series of events including an SOA Watch Encuentro, the Lobby Days to Close the SOA, and the LASC/NACL Anti-Militarization Event that takes place on February 15-17 in an effort to close the SOA and bring change to Latin American policies.

On December 16, 2008, SOA Watch's Eric LeCompte, along with 16 partner organizations, met with five transition team members of the Obama administration including Michael Strautmanis, the White House Intergovernmental Relations Director, to discuss their feelings of U.S. policy on an international level, according an SOA Watch update. The SOA delivered a specific request to Obama to close the SOA on an "executive order."

In response to these efforts, DJPC plans to take legislative action and help close the SOA. On February 17 the same day as the SOA Day about Action, DJPC members plan to visit Representatives Jared Polis and Ed Perlmutter, and Senators Mark Udall and Michael Bennet encouraging them to help close the SOA. DJPC members are also urging members and their community to write letters to their Congressperson and President Obama about closing the military base.

National Level Initiatives

Five Latin American countries have pulled their militaries from the SOA. They are Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Uruguay and Venezuela. SOA representatives have met with officials in Nicaragua and Chile to request similar commitments from them. Nicaragua has denounced the SOA and Chile has reduced the number of military that it sends, but neither has withdrawn completely.

For more information about SOA Watch visit www.soaw.org and to stay updated on DJPC's efforts to close the SOA, visit our website for recent legislative news at www.denjustpeace.org



Students, religious leaders, & activists reflect in solidarity at the SOA gates Nov. 2008.

ADVOCACY & NONVIOLENT ACTIVISM UPDATE

By Amanda Miralrío, Legislative Intern

My name is Amanda Miralrío, and I am very pleased to be the Legislative Advocacy intern as of this past September. The Advocacy Committee spent the last months of 2008 taking action on some pivotal events in countries like Bolivia and Colombia, as well as preparing for changes the new administration will bring. Below are some highlights of the work the Advocacy Committee has done and plans to do:

- Following the August 10, 2008 referendum in Bolivia reaffirming Evo Morales' presidency, fighting between dissidents and government supporters left 16 dead. U.S. Ambassador Phillip Goldman was expelled from Bolivia for his support of anti-government groups. The Advocacy Committee wrote a letter to the State Department requesting that the U.S. cease funding to groups that undermine Bolivia's democratically

elected government and promote violence.

- DJPC members supported the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in their protest against Chipotle in Denver this past October. The CIW is campaigning for payment of one penny more per pound of tomatoes picked by farm workers for Chipotle.

- The Advocacy Committee signed a petition and made calls to the State Department asking the U.S. to pressure the Colombian government to end the violence against indigenous protestors. The Colombian military fired at a crowd of protestors and wounded 35 people in October.

- DJPC signed a petition communicating priorities for policy toward Latin America during the Obama administration.

- The Advocacy Committee watched the discussions surrounding the Colombia Free

Trade Agreement very closely and plans to send a letter to legislators should it come to a vote.

- DJPC Program Director Jerry Stookey traveled to Fort Benning, Georgia in November to demand the closing of the School of the Americas. The Advocacy Committee is joining the national campaign to close the School of the Americas and plans to visit the local offices of Senators Mark Udall and Michael Bennet, as well as Representatives Jared Polis and Ed Perlmutter on February 17th. We ask that DJPC members call or write letters to legislators on February 17th in favor of closing the School of the Americas. Contact information for Colorado legislators can be found in this issue of the Mustard Seed.

DJPC is poised to fight hard on behalf of Latin America in 2009 and is thankful for your support.

2009 CONGRESSIONAL CONTACTS

Senators

Michael Bennet (D)
(303) 455-7600
D.C.: (202) 224-5852

Mark Udall (D)
(303) 650-7820
D.C.: (202) 224-5941

Congressional Delegation

Mike Coffman (R, 6th District)
(720) 283-9772

Diana DeGette (D, 1st District)
(303) 844-4988

Doug Lamborn (R, 5th District)
(719) 520-0055

Betsy Markey (D, 4th District)
(970) 663-3536

Ed Perlmutter (D, 7th District)
(303) 274-7944

Jared Polis (D, 2nd District)
(303) 484-9596

John T. Salazar (D, 3rd District)
(719) 543-8200

Capitol Switchboard: (202) 225-3121

CAMINOS 2009 Education Delegation to Guatemala

June 14-23, 2009

Current K-12 teachers please join us!

A new outlook on the importance of education in human rights and global justice.

The Guatemalan indigenous populations, a highly marginalized people, were guaranteed the right to education with the signing of the 1996 Peace Accords. CAMINOS invites current K-12 teachers to discover and experience the educational advancements and the struggles that still persist after the end of a disastrous internal conflict.

Cost: \$900 + airfare to Guatemala City

*Take advantage of the great opportunity to **earn graduate credit** through Adams State. These credits include an addition \$115 plus \$35 administrative fees to be paid through Adam's State.

Applications deadline: March 16th

Participants will have the participate in the following:

Experience the transformational power of experiential learning in a traveling classroom and earn 3 credits in multi-cultural/education studies.

Discover how the Guatemalan education system operates—compare and contrast differences in rural and urban facilities, including the discrepancies between private and public education.

Visit multiple educational facilities and participate in an exchange with the educators and students. You will also visit Tesorito and learn about a distinctively unique educational experience from members of the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPR) before and after their forced relocation.

-Take advantage of the opportunity to experience Guatemala's history, meet inspirational individuals and also reflect upon the effects of poverty and war on education.

For more **details** about the delegation please visit the Denver Justice and Peace Committee's website at: www.denjustpeace.org or call DJPC at 303-623-1463.

Contact Jane Covode at jcovode@ecentral.com or Sheila Malcolm at sheilamalcolm@comcast.net for more information.



CAMINOS

CAMINOS is a program of the Denver Justice & Peace Committee (DJPC) that sponsors and supports human rights accompaniers in Guatemala



Accompaniment for Solidarity

By Ruby Wara-Goss

Dear Community of the Denver Justice & Peace Committee,

Thank you for inviting me to write a little about my experience thus far as a human rights accompanier in Guatemala. I also would like to thank you for co-sponsoring my work down here. Recognizing the value of solidarity work across borders fuels hope for peace and justice in Guatemala.

I currently write to you from the remote northern rainforest area of Guatemala, in an area called Ixcán in the province of Quiché, a region which borders the Mexican state of Chiapas. For those of you unfamiliar with this region at the time Carter and Reagan presided over our country, I will briefly explain.

About 15 years after Guatemala's internal armed conflict began, the two biggest intellectual authors of



Guatemala's genocide, Romeo Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt, landed the presidential seats of Guatemala, one right after the other. In their cumulative five years of power and under the "scorched earth" campaign, over half of the 200,000 forced murders and disappearances occurred, with one of the largest amount of massacres carried out in the Quiché province. One of these massacres occurred in Santa María Tzejá, the community where I am living and providing accompaniment to members of an association of genocide victims.

Since I arrived in Santa María Tzejá two months ago, several themes have surfaced in my life, mainly pertaining to transition in one form or another. The first theme is an obvious one, the adjustment from a large metropolitan city in the United States to an isolated, rural village in Guatemala. From washing clothes in fresh spring water to fetching 20 pounds of water in the blazing sun to checking my boots for scorpions and horse spiders, life in the tropics has been much more *duro* (tough) than my life in the San Francisco Bay Area. Inter- and intra-personal relationships would be the second theme. Long-term accompaniment requires close partnership: living, sleeping and traveling with one other person in close proximity for durations of a month, lasting at times for several months. Transitioning to this lifestyle is like an informal class in matrimonial harmony, especially coming from a culture where personal space is built in. These informal experiences have yielded greater insight into my comforts, needs and overall self-awareness.

The third theme is humility. I speak from the place of an

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accompanier, whose role is providing a dissuasive presence and a measure of security for the genocide victims of Santa María Tzejá who are in the long legal process of denouncing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Much of my day consists of passing time with community members, some associated formally as genocide victims while others not. What unites most of them is the collective suffering that the massacre inflicted. This includes the necessity of rebuilding what was destroyed after their forced separation in the massacre aftermath, with half fleeing to Mexico and the other half being held captive under the army's "model communities." Like my colleague and former accompanier, Phil Neff, stated in the *Mustard Seed's* last issue, "Those of us who hear such testimony have the responsibility to act, in the ways in our power, on behalf of justice." This leads to my final theme, solidarity, a concept that challenges me, with every

war-torn story I am privy to hear. I believe we do need to act to the best of our abilities for the purpose of unifying larger themes of injustices found in almost every corner of the world, including the global south and north. Recognizing the common struggles between the United States and Guatemala that we as human beings attempt to unify around, while actively denouncing them from a place of shared experiences, has helped me approach solidarity in accompaniment from a slightly more genuine and horizontal fashion.

In closing, I want to say again, "*¡Muchas gracias!*" to the whole DJPC community for supporting the work that I, and so many others before and after me, do.

In solidarity,
Ruby Wara-Goss

Another Delegation with a New Twist

By Sheila Malcolm

CAMINOS continues its successful series of delegations to Guatemala with a focus on education as a restorative justice tool. CAMINOS invites current K-12 teachers to discover and experience the educational advancements and struggles that still persist in the Guatemalan education system after the signing of the 1996 Peace Accords. Join us from June 14-23, 2009, for an exciting, colorful and highly informative adventure!

This is an excellent opportunity for teachers to combine travel to five destinations within Guatemala,



visit a variety of school settings, meet the educators shaping policy in the country today, and earn 3 graduate credits through Adams State College. After arriving in Guatemala City, the delegation will travel by guide-driven van and, briefly, in the back of pick-up trucks! Lodging includes hostel, dormitory-style rooms and a rustic home-stay in the community of Tesorito. The two CAMINOS leaders will be experienced Guatemalan travelers and proficient Spanish speakers and translators.

A complete itinerary and application form will soon be posted on the www.denjustpeace.org website. Cost of the delegation is \$900 plus airfare to and from Guatemala City. Take advantage of the great opportunity to earn graduate credit through Adams State College for an additional \$115 (plus \$35 administrative fees). This trip will be listed in the Adams State Summer Course catalog and online.

Need more details right away? Please contact Jane Covode at jcovode@ecentral.com or Sheila Malcolm at sheilamalcolm@comcast.net.

Violence at the Womb: Forced Sterilization and Human Rights in Latin America

By Amy D. Bhalla

For many, reproductive health is often laden with political and religious controversies. In the West, debates around reproductive health are typically characterized by tensions between personal freedom and choice. In stark contrast, reproductive health for many women throughout Latin America can be devoid of personal choice and discretion. For Latinas, those making perhaps the most intimate of life's personal decisions are oftentimes authoritarian leaders, church officials, or far-removed policy makers. Moreover, throughout Latin America, access to reproductive health care is often stymied by discriminatory practices that harm indigenous and minority women, their families, and communities.

According to a recent report by the Center for Reproductive Rights, "Forced sterilization is a violation of a woman's most basic human rights and is all too often committed against members of vulnerable groups, which deserve special protection." It is important to examine forced sterilization, and more specifically government practices and policies that promote forced sterilization, from a human rights perspective. Significantly, as a human rights violation, instances of forced and coerced sterilization can be prosecuted, and governments held accountable to individuals and communities that have suffered.

Moreover, harmful practices of forced sterilization

raise questions about Latin American health policies more generally. An examination of health services is of particular importance for women belonging to marginalized minority and indigenous groups because they are often left out of decisions regarding their health, particularly in family planning. Instances of forced or coerced sterilization policies and practices that target indigenous or minority women throughout Latin America reveal broader political and social norms that perpetuate sexual violence and violence against women.

To date, little has been done to end this severe human rights violation that affects the lives of women, their families, and communities throughout Latin America. Despite limited prosecution and remuneration for victims and their families, the injustice at the heart of the matter remains—women's bodies, and their wombs, continue to be a site for political and social violence. For the women and communities affected by forced sterilization, public acknowledgement and awareness of wrongs committed can be the most significant reparation. For rights defenders, activists, and victims of forced sterilization, one such gesture may have meaningful and lasting impacts for all.

From the World Social Forum

By Gabriela Flora

Gabriela Flora, DJPC board member, is participating in the World Social Forum along with colleagues from the American Friends Service Committee. Excerpts from her blog follow.

In the midst of the joyful energy of second full day of the World Social Forum, we presented our workshop, "Seeking Integrated Social Change: A Values-Based Approach to Organizing". I opened the workshop by having everyone introduce themselves and share a value that brought them to the World Social Forum. It was humbling to hear folks from four continents express the beliefs that bring them to this place in the Amazon to work on living out new visions for our planet and communities.

Throughout the workshop those in the room explored the connections between war, militarism of our youth and our borders, the lack of access to a safety net and the dehumanization of the vulnerable in our communities. This was juxtaposed with the connections we see in organizing where the dignity of all human beings is respected, where leading with love is valued and where economies are based on fostering human and community potential.

The full blog can be found at <http://wearetheworldsocialforum-afsc.blogspot.com/>. Look for Gabriela's complete report and analysis in the next issue of The Mustard Seed.

2009 Salon Discussion Series Updates

By Devon Zimmerling, salon intern

Don't forget to mark your calendars for DJPC's upcoming Salon Series Discussions for 2009!

After a successful January salon, DJPC is excited to continue its 2009 Salon Discussion Series. Returned accompaniers from Guatemala, an attorney recently arrested at the 2008 School of the Americas protest, and the former Associate Director of the Peace Corps in Bolivia (and also former coordinator of DJPC's Global Solutions to Violence program) will speak of their experiences and activist work in the upcoming Salons.

On January 15, Michelle Doherty, DJPC's Guatemalan Human Rights Intern, began the 2009 series with a salon presentation on the issue of forced sterilization of women in Peru. Last summer, Michelle worked in Peru as an intern with MAM Fundacional, a women's rights organization formed in response to the forced sterilization program put in place by ex-head of state, Alberto Fujimori. Fujimori, alleged to have committed several human rights violations during his presidency in Peru, sponsored the forced sterilization program as part of his campaign "to end poverty" which,



in reality, did nothing of the sort.

Michelle, a graduate student at the University of Denver (DU), worked with MAM Fundacional through DU's International Human Rights Advocacy Center in investigating these cases and pursuing legal justice for the affected women and their families.

At the salon, Michelle shared the testimonies from several women who underwent forced sterilization. So that the audience could appreciate the complexity of the issues, they discussed and proposed restitution plans from the perspectives of different stakeholders in the process. Understanding the importance of this work, the audience signed a letter to Congressista Hilaria Supa-Huamán and MAM Fundacional supporting their efforts to bring justice.

DJPC looks forward to other engaging presentations throughout the 2009 Salon Series. The February salon, which will be held Feb.19, in the Community Room at DJPC's office at Courthouse Apartments, will feature Phil Neff and Beth Lavelly, returned international human rights accompaniers. Beth and Phil will discuss accompaniment as a strategy for advancing human rights, the historic roots of genocide and impunity in Guatemala, and contemporary struggles for social and economic justice.

DJPC will sponsor a presentation on March 19 on the School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC), a U.S. military school at Fort Benning, GA, that trains Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques.

Theresa Cusimano, a delegate

from Regis University, will speak about her experience of being arrested and tried in court after attending the 2008 SOA protest.

The April 16 salon will feature Daniel Lopez, former Associate Director of the Peace Corps in Bolivia (and former coordinator of DJPC's Global Solutions to Violence program) and Jonathan "Jonas" Moller, human rights fine art photographer and recipient of DJPC's 2008 Global Peacemaker Award. They will speak about their activist work in light of the political situation in Bolivia.

Please join DJPC to hear these worthwhile speakers. The Salon Series Discussions are held on the third Thursday of each month.

For more information on upcoming salons or to download the February Salon flyer, visit www.denjustpeace.org, call 303-623-1463, or email DJPC at djpc@denjustpeace.org





DJPC 2009 Salon Series presents

Guatemalan Accompaniers Return

Featuring **Beth Lavelly** and **Philip Neff**, returned international human rights accompaniers.



February 19, 2009
7-9 pm

Beth and Philip will discuss accompaniment as a tactic for advancing human rights, the historic roots of genocide and impunity in Guatemala, and contemporary struggles for social and economic justice.

Denver Justice and Peace Committee
Courthouse Square Apartments
Community Room
901 W. 14th Avenue, Denver

RSVP: 303-623-1463 or djpc@denjustpeace.org

Please park in any empty spaces immediately facing the building, or along the fence facing 14th Avenue. Since it is an apartment complex, certain spaces are reserved!

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