

THE

# MUSTARD SEED



**Denver Justice & Peace Committee**

*Celebrating 25 years of peace and justice !!*

901 W. 14th Ave., Suite 7, Denver, CO 80204, (303) 623-1463, [www.denjustpeace.org](http://www.denjustpeace.org)  
January 2005, Volume 26, Number 1

## DJPC Celebrates a Quarter Century of Solidarity

*By Brenda K. Gillen*



In 1979, Jimmy Carter was President, gas was rationed, and there was a meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant. While Americans worried about the possibility of nuclear fallout, mothers in developing nations watched their babies waste away. An estimated one million babies under the age of one died from malnutrition caused by reliance on infant formula.

That didn't sit well with John Proctor and a small group of Denver's citizens. They banded together to participate in an international boycott to protest unethical marketing of infant formula in the third world. The boycott, aimed at the Swiss-based Nestlé Corporation and its subsidiaries, became a global campaign. The matter was settled in 1981 when the World Health Organization voted to restrict the promotion of such products. In Denver, the organizers of the local boycott formed the Denver Justice and Peace Committee to address global injustice in developing nations.

On Nov. 12, 2004, more than 200 supporters filled the Cameron United Methodist

Church in celebration of the Denver Justice and Peace Committee's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The festivities included a potluck, silent auction, music, speakers, and awards for hard-working activists. The evening was about history, both past, and that yet to be written. Topics discussed during the event included the ongoing struggles of the Latin American people, the recent divisive U.S. election, and efforts for peace during a protracted war on terrorism.

The group's early international actions were recalled, including DJPC's 1980's era participation in a campaign against Western Airlines' cooperation with the U.S. government's deportation of Salvadorans, and a movement to declare Denver a sanctuary for Central American refugees.



*Over 200 people celebrated the DJPC's 25th Anniversary!!*

DJPC programs continue to support Latin Americans. The CAMINOS program sponsors a human rights observer in Guatemala to accompany witnesses seeking justice in legal cases against former military dictators. Locally, the Global Solutions to Violence Program teaches

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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.

### **DJPC Board of Directors:**

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**Thanks to all the volunteers and interns who continue to help out in the office, with program development, fund-raising, newsletter publication, mailings and website. We couldn't do it without you!**

## ***Message From the Board***

*By Jim Chaney*

'It was a chilly overcast day when the horseman spied the little sparrow lying on its back in the middle of the road  
with her legs in the air.

Reining in his mount he looked down and inquired  
of the fragile creature,

"Why are you lying upside down like that?

You could get run over!"

"I heard the sky was falling", replied the sparrow.

"And I suppose your spindly little legs can hold up  
the heavens!" roared the horseman

"One does what One can", the sparrow replied.'

In spite of feeling a bit daunted at being the only current board member yet to visit Central America that might better inform these sights, they are humbly offered here. Paraphrasing Pax Christi – 'one does what one can'.

An election, a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Winter Solstice, Christmas, the New Year and the winter holidays have come and gone as we gird our loins for the 2<sup>nd</sup> reign of George II. In the midst of these tensions, a war rages in Iraq with no end in sight and a natural calamity has staggered millions in South Asia and Earth-round. The sharp moral contrast and social juxtaposition of the international disaster relief efforts and the war are tragically and inescapably ironic and incongruent. It is enough to make us lose our balance.

We search for inspiration and sustenance that informs our work and service. And so, it prompts a question or two: What does inform our spirit of service for Peace & Justice? Is it helpful to reflect and identify who and what might inspire us?

We could recollect a small pantheon of mentors whose lives and writings inform us. There are the obvious and prominent folks like Rigoberta and Oscar; Dorothy Day; churchwomen Ita, Maura, Jean & Dorothy, Fr. Ellacuria and other martyrs of El Salvador. Prophets like Jon Sobrino, Arundhati Roy of India and Bill Schulz who most recently reminded us at our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that (c.) "the Arc of the Universe bends towards Justice!"

But also Astrid, a generous and faithful Salvadoran woman, (namesake for her mother and a Greek Goddess of Divine Strength) who lives on the edge of subsistence, but finds the resources to send heart-felt cards and gifts – a su hermana-norteamericana en Denver.

What else informs us? Our families and loved ones, grown children, a grandson and animal companions. Many of us are inspired by the witness and service of friends in our own local communities – Patti and Fr. Jim in Salvador in the '90s, Shirley & Byron, Anna at the Catholic Worker, Tom, Al, Sue, Mac and others at the Soup Kitchen, an enlightened teaching by Fr. Tom about Action and Contemplation. And our own community of CAMINOS alumni - Susan, Rick, Denise,

*(Continued on page 3)*



## **GSTV UPDATE**

*By Christie Roberts*

The Global Solutions to Violence program continues to grow! In the Fall 2004 semester, our educators gave more than forty classes to nearly seven hundred Denver-area students. In response to the question "Were there any things we did particularly well?" one teacher exclaimed, "The usual great things! What I notice now, following up, is that you laid the seeds for the kids volunteering (a good number of them) to do follow-up summarizing in Spanish & reporting on Colombia and on current reports coming from the Americas . . ."

Not only has response from students and teachers been outstanding, outside organizations that have already committed financial support to the GSTV program. We are proud to announce that in 2004 we were awarded grants from The Wolcott Family Foundation, Light of the World Parish and Spritis of Christ Catholic Community in metro Denver and from the Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois, the Loretto Community Special Needs Fund and the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute. This is in addi-

tion to the continued pledges and donations received by our DJPC members.

Since the program continues to grow so quickly, this new financial support is doubly important as we will be able to hire a part-time coordinator specifically for the GSTV program.

We are launching two new class series in addition to our current programs. The first looks at U.S. – Cuba relations and was developed in collaboration with the Center for Teaching International Relations at the University of Denver. This program will be available for the upcoming spring semester, following a training designed to familiarize educators with the curriculum. The two-day training will be held on Wednesday, February 16 and 23; participants must attend both days. A limited number of spaces are still available. For information, contact the DJPC office at [djpc@denjustpeace.org](mailto:djpc@denjustpeace.org) or 303.623.1463.

The second class, which is in the final stages of development, is on Immigration, dealing with the conditions that motivate Latin Americans to leave their home countries and emigrate to the United States, and the situations they often face upon arrival here. Both the Immigration and Cuba classes should be available for the 2005 Spring semester.

*(Continued from page 2)*

others - and Kareen who will be embarking on her new journey of service sooner than we would choose.

For many of us, it is multi-layered –our Spiritual Communities often inform and inspire our service as an authentic act of faith and conscience: The Ten-Thirty Community, Mountain View Friends, the Buddhist Christian Interfaith Community at St Paul's Methodist Church.

The Arts also inform us - a painting or sculpture or a piece of memorial architecture like Maya Lin's Wall; a cutting-edge Latina play performed by El Centro Su Teatro, the timeless and tragic 'Antigone', or 'The Mad Woman of Chaillot'; a wise and profoundly funny book like 'The Barn at the End of the World' or 'Unexpected News', an accessible primer on Liberation Theology; and Jonathan Moller's devastating and haunting Guatemalan photo-journal that is much more than just a book of photographs. The Arts have that capacity to take our breath away, to prod, provoke, inspire and challenge us.

And we are informed by our opportunities for service with DJPC, in partnership with and for the Peoples of Guatemala and Latin America. This winter, give us a call or come by our office and see what we are up to. This winter, this New Year, resolve to take time to Rest, to Reflect, to Recharge and to Recover our balance – To Renew our inward journey that nurtures the peace within, the peace that will truly inform our outward journey for work and service for Peace and Justice.

Namaste'

## We are Americans – A Call to Action

By Joice Fairchild

(given on the steps of the State Capitol Building in Denver on December 11, 2004)

I am an American mother, who worried about her son constantly.  
While he was in Iraq, I met the parents of a wounded soldier.  
A father struggling to maintain his composure  
Explained that his son's injuries were beyond medical care,  
His spirit was gone along with his legs.

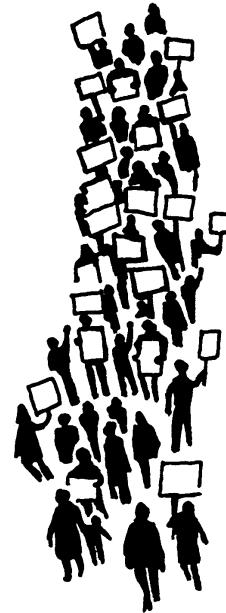
Plagued with my own anxiety, I wanted to turn away and cry,  
But I didn't because I am an American  
We don't run away when honesty becomes painful.

Honesty and integrity are the attributes that we stand for.  
Truth and justice have always been the American way.

We are Americans.  
No one had to tell us that the presidential election was a fraud.  
We knew the exit polls weren't suddenly wrong in all key states.  
We could feel it right down to the pits of our stomachs,

My son received the Bronze Star for risking his life to boost morale  
By flying around Iraq building internet connections  
So soldiers could communicate with their families at home  
My son is an American hero  
After the election, he looked at me with disgust and said,

"If the American People accept this, we deserve what we get."  
"If the American People accept this, we deserve what we get."



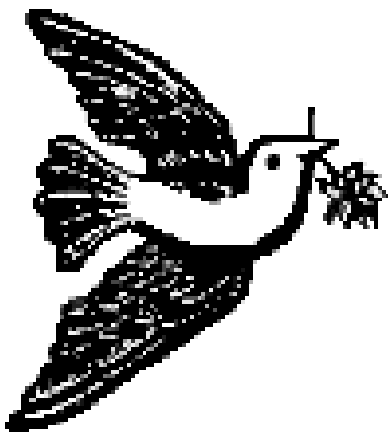
I am an American.  
I will not throw away democracy  
As if it were an old dress that had gone out of style.  
No matter the challenge, I will stand for integrity.  
Because I know in my heart  
That we all want the president of the United States  
To be chosen by the majority of the American people.

We are Americans.

I am an American sister  
with a brother buried in a military cemetery.  
On Memorial Day, a team of soldiers places small flags  
By each of the hundreds of thousands of white headstones  
That stretch across the long meadows in never-ending rows  
To honor the men and women who fought to defend America.

The cost of honestly counting the vote seems small to me  
Compared to what we have paid for America's freedom.  
Those who deceive us and manipulate the outcome  
Trample on my brother's grave.

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*(Continued from page 4)*

Does he not matter any more?

Did they all die for a freedom that has been beaten into submission?

Do not cower to abusers even in our own country.

We are Americans.

I am an American daughter.

My father saw the guiding light in Liberty's hand

When he came here from Poland to escape tyranny

One in a multitude who struggled through great peril

To reach what was once the shores of freedom

America, the proud democracy.



We must not let democracy perish in our homeland.

Remember the nine-eleven attack

The unspeakable horror that united us all

We were one proud nation,

Standing together in empathy and compassion,

We were Americans.

American firemen and policemen entered the burning buildings,

Heroic citizens took the time to help each other escape

People all over the world were touched by our actions

The newspapers proclaimed

In French, German and many other languages

"I am an American".

We are Americans, millions strong; a resourceful people

Let the word be spread throughout our land

We do not accept lies and deception

Americans are entitled to an honest election.

Check the Constitution; remember the Pledge of Allegiance

"...with Liberty and Justice for all."

We are Americans and the core of our heritage is under attack.

Stand with us and fight for our rights.

Shine the bright light of honesty

In the face of this election fraud.

Democracy must not die on our watch!

We are Americans, capable and strong.

Let the truth be told from sea to shining sea.

Our liberty is not for sale or squander.

We want an honest election, now

We can settle for nothing less, because

We are Americans!



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Mark Surma

## The 108<sup>th</sup> Congressional Wrap Up ~ Congressional Report Card

In a poor show of solidarity, Colorado's U.S. House of Representatives and Senators failed terribly, according to Latin America Working Group's congressional scorecard for 2004. In the House, there was not a single show of support from Colorado's Representatives on the Farr/Taylor Letter to the Armed Services that advocated lowering the troop cap in Colombia or on the McGovern letter on Human Rights Defenders sent to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe calling for him to protect human rights advocates.

Out of all Colorado's U.S. elected officials, only Diana DeGette and Mark Udall in the House voted for any major legislation last year favorable to Latin America. To express our gratitude, please take time to thank both DeGette and Udall's offices for their continued support toward the people of Latin America. They both showed strong support for Cuban initiatives, by voting for the Davis, Rangel and CJS amendments. DeGette and Udall both co-sponsored HR 1258, the bill to close and investigate the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly the US Army School of the Americas). Udall co-sponsored the Juarez Resolution, which expressed sympathy for the families of the women murdered in the border cities of Juarez and Chihuahua City, Mexico. DeGette also co-sponsored the SOLVE Act that provides immigration reform for Mexico. Neither bill was voted on in 2004. Disappointingly, both Allard and Campbell abstained from or voted against important policies regarding Latin America in the Senate.

While we do not always agree with the positions of Joel Hefley, we do believe he deserves to be commended for his courageous and even-handed application of the House ethics rules to persons of power within his own party.

We cannot afford to let our voices go unheard in 2005. The induction of freshmen Senator Ken and House Rep. John Salazar provides us the opportunity to improve Colorado's support for Latin America. As the 109<sup>th</sup> session opens January 20<sup>th</sup>, it is our responsibility as global citizens to contact and educate new members of Congress, (while they begin to formulate their positions on foreign policy) as well as to keep in contact with and (re)educate returning members of Congress. DJPC is planning visits to our congressional offices, particularly with Senator Salazar, in February. If you are interested in participating or for more information, please contact DJPC at 303.623.1463.

## Military aid for troops in Colombia doubles



Congress passed the 2005 defense bill increasing US troop presence in Colombia by 100% and civilian military contractors by 50% in an extended October joint House-Senate conference session. Earlier in the year, Rep. Gene Taylor (D-MS) introduced an amendment in the House to limit the number of U.S. troops to 500 and private contractors to 400 in the House, and Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) offered a companion amendment in the Senate. Correspondingly, Senator Warner (R-VA) and Rep. Hunter (R-CA) argued to eliminate the troop cap altogether. Compromise was finally reached at a troop cap of 800 U.S. troops and 600 contractors.

In the Senate, Senators Feingold (D-WI) and Dodd (D-CT) had 23 senators, including Kerry and Edwards, sign on to a companion letter to (House) McGovern letter to President Uribe on Human Rights. These letters were pivotal in

educating U.S. Congresspersons and international media about Colombia's human rights violations and military practices.

## Legislative Update continued...

### Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill Passed

Congress passed the remainder of the 2005 foreign operations appropriations bill during the “lame duck” session last November. The bill pertains to foreign assistance programs and has deep impacts on military aid to Colombia, Bolivia, and Guatemala. This legislation appropriated \$731 million for Andean Counter-narcotics programs, with \$237 million of that designated for development aid.

### 2005 legislation ~ CAFTA

Last May, five Central American countries, as well as the Dominican Republic, completed negotiations on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with the United States, although the treaty still needs final approval from all signatories’ legislative bodies. (As of this printing, only El Salvador’s legislature has enacted CAFTA. It is expected to be voted on in the U.S. Congress as early as spring 2005. This comprehensive body of international law sets the paradigm for trade, investment, labor, environment, state, civil, and corporate relations for the twenty-first century between the United States, most of Central America and the Dominican Republic. If approved, it will take legal precedence over current legislation in all participating countries.

CAFTA is predicted to fail in Congress but only marginally. After the Republican gains in the last election, it is imperative to remind our representatives to vote against the faulted legislation. In addition to increasing income inequality, poverty, foreign ownership, and debt as well as undermining democracy in the region, CAFTA would impact many Coloradans. Current U.S. sugar tariffs protect Colorado sugar beet farm families and cooperatives from cheaper foreign sugar cane. Most Coloradan sugar beet farmers reside in House Rep. Marilyn Musgrave’s 4th Congressional District.

### ACTION:

Contact Rep. Musgrave’s office and express your opposition to CAFTA. Help to educate the Colorado Congressional caucus about the impacts of this legislation before it is voted on. If you are interested in the DJPC legislative visits or for more information, please contact us at 303.623.1463. For more information about CAFTA please visit the DJPC website or [www.stopcafta.org](http://www.stopcafta.org).

### Congressional Contact Information

**Rep. Diana DeGette, 1st District**  
303-844-4988; 202-225-4431

**Rep. Mark Udall, 2nd District**  
303-650-7820; 202-225-2161

**Rep. John Salazar, 3rd District**  
202-225-4761

**Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, 4th District**  
970-663-3536; 202-225-4676

**Rep. Joel Hefley, 5th District**  
719-520-0055; 202-225-4422

**Rep. Tom Tancredo, 6th District**  
720-283-9772; 202-225-7882

**Rep. Bob Beauprez, 7th District**  
303-940-5821; 202-225-2645

**Sen. Wayne Allard**  
303-220-7414; 202-224-5941

**Sen. Ken Salazar**  
202-224-5852

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Denver-area high school students about peace, nonviolence, and globalization. These programs are funded in part by proceeds from a silent auction held during the anniversary celebration. A variety of items were available for bid, including fine art, books, clothing, jewelry, food, and gift certificates for massages, Spanish lessons, and even a haircut. Over \$1200 was raised from the auction.

William Schulz, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA, was the keynote speaker for the event and recipient of the DJPC Global Justice and Peace award. Since 1994, Schulz has been a spokesperson for Amnesty, carrying the message about human rights to local, national, and international audiences. Before joining Amnesty, the ordained Unitarian Universalist minister was president of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. He was involved in a variety of social justice causes including championing the rights of religious and ethnic minorities in Romania in the early 1990s. Throughout his career, he has defended the rights of women, gays, lesbians, and prisoners.

Schulz discussed human rights violations occurring in the U.S. under the guise of security as detailed in his recent book, *Tainted Legacy: 9/11 and the Ruin of Human Rights* (Nation Books, 2003). While he spoke about horrific things that are occurring—ethnic cleansing in the Darfur region of Sudan, the war in Iraq, and a billion women worldwide subjected to violence—Schulz said activists must remain optimistic while focusing on the long haul. He said, “The arc of the universe bends toward justice” and offered as examples the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam when the majority of Americans still favored U.S. involve-

ment in the conflict, and recent polls indicating declining support for the death penalty.

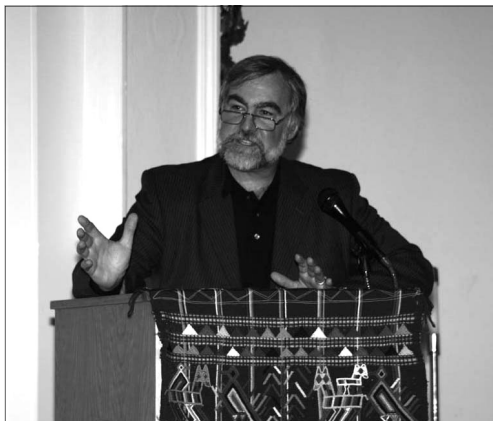
Schulz also urged DJPC members to resist divisive efforts. “This isn’t just a one party America. This is our America, too.” Looking beyond the polarizing election of 2004, Schulz envisioned a future with human rights, with justice and most of all, with hope.

The annual gathering provided the opportunity for DJPC members to congregate and for the board to show its appreciation for members’ efforts throughout the year. Harriet Mullaney, Board Vice-Chair, acknowledged contributions of every member, from those involved in the Nestlé boycott to the newest ones. Each year, the board recognizes the outstanding contributions of one member. The John Proctor Member of the Year award was presented to Wendy Hawthorne. The award, named after the volunteer who organized the Denver area component of the Nestlé boycott, was bestowed on Hawthorne for her commitment to DJPC. She served on the DJPC board from 1999 to Spring 2004, dedicating herself to furthering DJPC goals and enhancing the success of its programs.

Outside DJPC, Wendy manages Lead-Safe Denver, a program that improves housing conditions for low-income children. She also was active in the political campaigns of Howard Dean, John Kerry, and Mike Miles. Wendy’s participation as a witness in a lawsuit filed by DJPC against the Golden Police Department last year deepened her understanding of the need for DJPC and organizations of its kind.

DJPC’s work in Latin America was brought home by Otoniel de la Roca Mendoza, a Guatemalan refugee who gave a moving ac-

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*William Schulz, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA.*



*Rick Clifford of the DJPC Board presents Wendy Hawthorne with the John Proctor Member of the Year award.*



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count of his experiences. He was captured by the Guatemalan Army in the mid-1980s, held as a POW, and tortured. Paramilitary groups in Guatemala executed his wife, parents, sister, and a cousin. He sought refuge in the U.S. in 1997 but, as recently as July 2004, a family member was executed as part of an effort to intimidate him. The killings and threats, according to the Amnesty International, are related to de la Roca's appearances before the Inter-American Court in Costa Rica. He wants the murderers of his family found and put on trial. His story illustrates the importance of the Denver Justice and Peace Committee's ongoing solidarity with Latin Americans.

Thanks to all who made this amazing night a huge success. And thanks to everyone who has supported the DJPC these last 25 years. Here's to the next 25!



*Guatemalan torture survivor Otoniel de La Roca Mendoza tells his story with Daniel Lopez interpreting.*



*Long-time DJPC members Bob and Louise Carlsten and Natalie Warner.*



*Ellen Klaver and Linda Gore lead everyone in song.*



*Schulz speaking with DJPC Board Chair and Vice Chair Richard Kruch and Harriet Mullaney*

*All photos for this article taken by Joel Shure.*

**Are you receiving our e-mails about Events, Announcements, Action Alerts and/or Central America Updates? If you would like to be on our e-list, e-mail us at: [djpc@denjustpeace.org](mailto:djpc@denjustpeace.org)**

# Realidades y Resistencia: Messages from Colombian Communities in Peaceful Resistance

By Gabriela Flora

During an American Friends Service Committee delegation to Colombia this past October, I was honored to meet with Afro-Colombian, indigenous and union leaders resisting



*Young Afro-Colombians are taught dances that their ancestors performed during slavery.*

violence and working for peaceful change. I was humbled by the realities I learned of and was charged by the people I met to bring their stories back to the U.S., the country that has contributed \$3.9 billion dollars in "aid" to Colombia since 2000 – 80% of which has been military aid.

Colombia has been engaged in a civil war for over 50 years. This war is rooted in economic,

political and social inequalities that run very deep. While Colombia is a wealthy country, these riches are not shared equitably. Next to Brazil, Colombia has the most inequitable distribution of wealth in the Western Hemisphere. Sixty-four percent of Colombia's population of 44 million lives below the poverty line.

In the mountains of Colombia, we visited Afro-Colombian communities who are living far from their original lands on the tropical north Pacific coast. For decades, national and international commercial interests have been usurping land from Afro-Colombians for hydroelectric dam construction, pine and palm plantations, cattle and dairy production, and oil and mineral extraction. This has resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Afro-Colombians.

In 1985, the construction of a mega-hydroelectric dam flooded thousands of acres and displaced hundreds of people. These people joined together and formed the "Association of Small Landholders" to find a solution to their displacement. After five years of struggle, the Colombian Agrarian Institute provided them with a farm in the mountains where they now reside and work the land, both communally and individually.

One of the requirements of being a member of the Association is that you cannot grow coca.

Although the profits from coca are many times greater than other crops, the Association is very conscious in its efforts to engage in sustainable livelihoods and live a peaceful existence. This has not been easy for a range of reasons. The area is controlled by the FARC guerrillas, which has led to military and paramilitary forces entering the area and establishing roadblocks that sometimes prevent crops from getting to market.

Two days prior to our arrival in another highland community, "Placencia", a man had been shot forty times. The community believes that he was shot by paramilitaries because he would not sell his land to a large, powerful landowner in the area. The paramilitaries have financial and intelligence ties to the Colombian military and are often contracted by the elites to maintain their power. According to Human Rights Watch, the paramilitaries are responsible for 80% of the massacres and human rights violations in Colombia.

A tactic of intimidation utilized by the armed actors – the military and paramilitaries on one side and the guerrillas on the other – is to label someone who will not support them as a member of the opposite side. Yet, Colombian communities in peaceful resistance consciously and vocally choose not to support either side of the armed actors, and many have faced death due to this resistance.



*Many rural communities are sandwiched between the armed actors, the military and the paramilitary on the one hand and the FARC guerrillas on the other.*

## What can you do to support justice in Colombia?

- Oppose US military aid to Colombia ([www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org))
  - Support drug prevention and treatment in US
  - Join campaign to shut down the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly the U.S. Army School of Americas ([www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org))
- Oppose Andean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) and Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) as precursor to Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) ([www.citizenstrade.org](http://www.citizenstrade.org), [www.afsc.org/trade-matters/](http://www.afsc.org/trade-matters/))
  - Support alternative economic development
- Boycott Coca-Cola and Nestle ([www.killercoke.org](http://www.killercoke.org) and [www.cokewatch.org](http://www.cokewatch.org))

In 2000, when the paramilitaries came to Placencia, three to five people were assassinated per day. Twenty-two year old “Silvia” explained to us that the paramilitaries “have changed their strategy. Today they are only killing our leaders. They want to show us that they can be our friends but still maintain power through the fear and trauma they have brought to our communities.” Silvia, like many other community members, fears that the paramilitaries are going to kill their elders and that their cultural and traditional knowledge will die with them.

Silvia is studying business administration through long distance education. She is one of the few Afro-Colombians who have access to higher education. Illiteracy rates for Afro-Colombians are 20% in urban areas and 40% in rural areas, double the national averages. This is rooted in the longstanding racism within Colombia linked with the high rates of displacement. Silvia is active in her local Municipal Association of Women where she works with other women on income generation projects ranging from organic wine production, to a seed bank, to jewelry production. Silvia’s group is part of 13 Women’s Associations in the area that work together to maintain and strengthen community knowledge and resist displacement peacefully. Silvia is active in the Women’s group and her church group, bringing new skills to her community and strengthening local knowledge so that people don’t have to leave in order to survive.

We met with leaders of the Colombia United Workers Federation (CUT), representatives of the food manufacturing, health care and teachers unions, and learned how Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist. Union

members are pressured to resign from their union, are illegally fired, and experience death threats, incarceration and assassinations. Since 1991, two thousand trade unionists have been assassinated. These illegal killings have principally been carried out by paramilitaries with links to the Colombian military. Impunity reigns as only two perpetrators have been sentenced. Coca Cola and Nestlé are among the top international companies involved in human rights violations and massacres of trade unionists.

A leader from the food manufacturing union (SINALTRAINAL) told us the story of his colleague, Isidro Segundo Gil, who was shot seven times in a Coke bottling plant by paramilitaries. The workers were in the process of contract negotiations with Coke. After killing Gil, the paramilitaries burned the union’s office. The next day they returned to the plant and told the workers they had until 4:00 PM to rescind their union membership or face death. At that time, the workers earned between \$380 to \$400 per month. The unionized workers were replaced with workers who earn \$130 per month.

In spite of these efforts to decimate unions, trade unionists are resisting the violence against

them through a variety of means. They continue to organize for better working conditions, the right to unionize, and access to health care and social security for all workers. CUT has a school for workers and their children where reading, writing and math are complemented with skills in working together for change. Unions are building alliances

with *campesinos* and indigenous people’s in Colombia that are facing similar threats. An



*Gabriela Flora with CUT labor leaders.*

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## CAMINOS UPDATE

By Susan Cotton

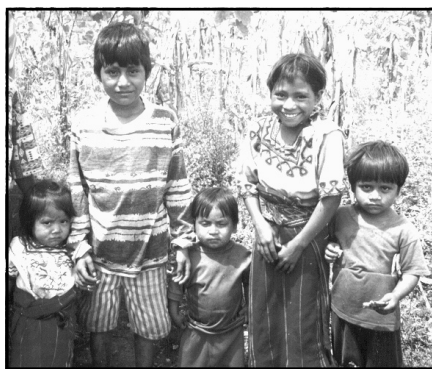


### Accompaniment in Genocide trials

The CAMINOS Program in Denver begins its 9th year providing human rights accompaniment to Ixil and K'iche Mayan populations who survived the brutal "scorched earth" and genocide policies of the Guatemalan civil war (1960-1996). A new accompanier is currently being trained, and will be in the country within the next 2 months. The accompanier will continue to work in the northern Guatemalan villages of Xix and Ilom, providing accompaniment to Mayan families who are testifying in the genocide trials against General Romeo Lucas Garcia.

### CAMINOS forms the Promesa Partnership to support health needs in the Guatemalan resettlement community of El Tesorito

*Promesa* is a new partnership between three entities – CAMINOS (Colorado/Maya Accompaniment Project of the Sierra) in Denver, Colorado; SMGP (St. Michael's Guatemala Project) in Tucson, Arizona; and the CPR (Communities of Populations in Resistance) Mayan governing committee in Guatemala. *Promesa's* goal is to improve health and primary health care delivery in Tesorito, Suchitepequez, by supporting the community's existing health structure and health workers. Three CAMINOS accompaniers – Ali Durbin, Kareen Erbe and Denise Peine – lived in Tesorito and several delegations have visited in community, the last in 2004.



Children in the community of Tesorito.

Tesorito is a settlement of 136 indigenous Mayan families who were relocated from their highland homes in K'iche province to the hot, humid Pacific coast at the end of the country's civil war (1960-1996). Today, after 7 years of resettlement, these families continue to struggle for physical and cultural survival. Local prejudices, unfamiliar crops and climate, lack of natural resources, adverse weather, coastal diseases, limited access to health services and a declining economy complicate their efforts.

Frequently encountered health problems in the community include childbirth emergencies, diarrhea, urinary infections, pneumonia, ear infections, conjunctivitis, arthritis, skin infections and abscesses, parasites, and malaria. Malnutrition is a serious problem, particularly among young children.

The *Promesa* Partnership helps support health needs in Tesorito by:

- providing small monthly incentive payments to health workers
- helping with transportation expense for patients who can't be treated locally
- paying travel costs for health workers in ongoing formal training
- helping purchase medicines and low-tech medical supplies
- arranging an annual visit to Tesorito by a *Promesa* delegate or delegation to collaborate with health workers for an extensive community health survey
- promoting advocacy and communication that encourages increased awareness of Guatemalan health and economic issues in the United States



Women carrying water in the community of Tesorito.

The *Promesa* Partnership is the latest effort by CAMINOS to continue to accompany the Mayan population of Tesorito, uprooted and traumatized by years of civil war and its unpromising aftermath, in their search for a "*vida digna*".

## Myth and Reality In The Time of Bush

By Richard Kruch

Many of us found the outcome of the last presidential election to be a sobering experience. It did not seem believable that half of our fellow Americans could have preferred Bush and what he stands for. On the other hand, having done our part while realizing that there was really no option to the continuing war in Iraq or a clear voice for peace and justice on either side, we are left watching the political fallout with a sense of angst and a deep concern about the future.

Those of us who allowed ourselves to be swept up in the campaign jingoism of "a stronger America" or that, "hope is on the way," may need an issue enema about now. Where does mythology leave off and where does reality begin? What really is the greatest threat to the United States and to life on the planet?

When the world's sole superpower decides to militarize and add to its already totally dominant force of arms and actions, how can the prospects for peace and, indeed, the fate of the entire planet not be compromised? Can such an action be rationalized as defensive? How can we avoid Peter Ustinov's haunting assessment that, "Terrorism is the war of the poor and war is the terrorism of the rich."

What real difference did John Kerry and the Democrats bring to the world forum that might to help address this paradox? For that matter, what was added to help alleviate U.S. dependency on military solutions, or its dependency on oil, or a dependency only on the grace of God to mitigate the impact of environmental degradation? From where do such initiatives come?

This is a time when individuals are called upon to act from their own sense of truth. Those who seek social justice and a sustainable, equitable economy have been marginalized by both parties and in the media. Military force is held to be believable while dialogue and social justice are not.

The leadership that can credibly advocate a new vision for peace and sustainability is still evolving. It is our own input that is still lacking. In truth, this has always been the case. Holding the light of truth to the podium of power has always been the mission of the peacemakers. There are critical



issues that await a champion. Here are just a few:

- 1) The Iraq war has demonstrated in the clearest terms that war itself, as a means of settling international disputes, is clearly a failed mechanism. Alternatives to war need to be championed.
- 2) Re-opening the dark abyss of another nuclear arms race and the militarization of space is inherently evil and an ill-conceived blunder, one that threatens all future life.
- 3) Mother Earth has a human problem. A mountain of evidence pointing to the demise of our ecosystem in the face of global warming, resource depletion, species extinction, disease pandemics and the myriad of environmental emergencies is crying for a sane, deliberate response.
- 4) The growing gap between rich and poor in the world must finally be addressed. The insatiable agency of corporate capital accumulation devoid of social responsibility, especially in context of desperate poverty, must be changed.
- 5) It is appropriate that people of economically advantaged countries initiate a re-examination of the responsibilities and stewardship inherent in the holding of resources and wealth. This includes the ongoing genocide of Indigenous people.
- 6) Technology is evolving so rapidly as to outpace our institutional and personal capacity to remain aware of who we are spiritually. To achieve civil equilibrium in the context of these changes, we must validate our own individual capacity to know what is true.
- 7) Both dominant political parties in the U.S. have marginalized those activist elements that have put compassion before self-interest and social justice before hegemony. These agencies have there-by lost the moral capacity to lead with wisdom and to administer equitably. Self-serving, arrogant policy-making has become unavoidable.

It is incumbent upon us all to find new ways to give expression and empowerment to the inner force of truth and love within us, individually and collectively. Directing our life force toward the pursuit of personal advantage for the sake of

*(Continued on page 14)*

## Ecuadorian Cloud Forests Threatened by Unlawful Mining

By Beth Lavelly

DePauw University Ecuadorian Solidarity Network

The beginning of this new year has been a turbulent one for the communities of Intag, Ecuador, which continue their struggle against the threat of Ascendant Mining and Exploration. While the communities strongly oppose mining, Ascendant's diverse tactics to gain access to land rights for massive copper mining projects present a formidable challenge to both protecting this rich biodiverse region and the burgeoning sustainable development movement within the communities.

Of the most immediate challenges that face the communities of Intag is the defense of the local newspaper, *Periodico Intag*, anti-mining activists and community groups in lawsuits that Ascendant has lodged. On January 4, 2005 Ascendant formally accused the *Periodico Intag* of libel, claiming "injurias calumniosas", journalistic injuries, and is asking for 1 million dollars in damages. Also accused are anti-mining community leader Polibio Perez and Jose Serrano, a lawyer colleague from the Centro de Derechos Economicos y Sociales (CDES).

These charges, while unsubstantiated, carry heavy penalties for the organizations and individuals accused and endanger strong grassroots community organizing, which is successfully mobilizing communities of Intag. Ascendant is a direct threat to community organizing brought about by the committed work of *Periodico Intag* and grassroots organizations like la Defensa y Conservacion Ecologica de Intag (DECOIN). A community group, DECOIN, suspects that the real goal of Ascendant is to "destroy the opposition to the project and create a false impression that the communities favor the mine, to lucratively sell the concession to a transnational corporation".

Ascendant maintains diverse tactics to attain access to mining, which include interception (stealing) of mail, interruption and potential monitoring of phone service and e-mail, rumors and disinformation and multiple, documented death threats. Editor of *Periodico Intag*, Mary Ellen Fieweger, has been both accused of slander and has received death threats from the company.



Examples of violence and intimidation include the experience of a local woman opposed to mining in the area was roughed up when she tried to safeguard a camera at a public hearing in November 2004. Her son's life was threatened when he tried to save the camera. Ascendant's appointment of general Cesar Villacis, ex-general for the Ecuadorian military, trained at U.S. Army School of the Americas in counter-insurgency tactics and dirty warfare, reaffirms the company's commitment to "violence if necessary" tactics.

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 13)

creature comfort and security is, by itself, a hollow shell of purpose unworthy of qualification for wisdom and emulation. We need to expand the qualifications for governing. Wishing and hoping will not make it so.

Denver Justice and Peace Committee is one of our community's clear and unfettered mechanisms to assist people in hooking up with their avenue for expression. If our programs do not directly deal with your area of passion, we will assist you in finding the right one.

As much as the issues can seem hopelessly overwhelming, they also bring to us the exciting context of the chapters in the human adventure yet unwritten. Before us is the real curriculum that comes with being born onto this planet at this time. It is called reality. Engage!

*(Lavelly, continued from page 14)*

The very presence of the company in the region is illegitimate, because land concessions were granted unlawfully. Jose Serrano claims that the Ministry of Energy and Mines violated the Constitution, which declares Cotacachi a green county, by auctioning concessions without consultation of the communities. Auki Tituaña reaffirms the unlawful selling of concessions as an “unambiguous violation of Ecuadorian constitutional rights”. The communities unanimously decided to bring before the Interamerican Human Rights Commission the case to investigate the corporation for both human rights abuses and the unlawful acquisition of land concessions.

The preservation of Intag is of the utmost importance. Intag's commitment to find alternatives to mining is in direct opposition to the neoliberal economic order that feeds on both ecological destruction and the maintenance of a system of dependency that currently cripples the economies of Latin America and the developing world at large. Carlos Zorilla, Director of DECOIN, explains that the conflict with Ascendant is not only for the immediate four communities, primary forests, endangered species and pristine rivers, but also for local community-based development, full respect for human rights; sustainable use of renewable resources, and cultural and biological diversity.

The forces working against the communities of Intag are powerful, but not insurmountable. Efforts by communities and solidarity networks have successfully defeated companies like Ascendant in the past. Only with mobilized support, though, can this challenge be met.

There are numerous ways to help. There is currently a letter campaign underway to let important parties know there is opposition to Ascendant. Also, DECOIN has created a legal defense fund to support those activists accused by the company. Because DECOIN mail is currently being stolen, the DePauw University Ecuadorian Solidarity Network (DUESN) is pooling donations to send to DECOIN. Please contact DUESN at [rjcomptoncenter@yahoo.com](mailto:rjcomptoncenter@yahoo.com) to make a donation or for more information about the letter campaign and other ways to help. For more information about DECOIN, *Periodico Intag*, and the conflict with Ascendant, please go to [www.decoin.org](http://www.decoin.org).

Let the communities of Intag know that there is international support for their right to organize. Ascendant Exploration will not be given free liberty to use scare tactics and death threats to take what is not rightfully theirs. ¡Viva Intag!

*(Flora, continued from page 11)*

example of this was the strong union participation in a September 2004 indigenous march demanding an end to violence and free trade agreements that exploit the rights of the Colombian people. The union representatives we met with view international solidarity alliances as critical to their survival and the possibility for peace in their country. That is why the union leaders we met with asked that people in the U.S. participate in the Coca Cola and Nestlé boycotts.

Colombia is a beautiful and complex country that is engaged in a violence that further marginalizes its Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations and is decimating trade unionists. Yet it is these communities and people who have the resilience, strength and insight to bring about Colombian peace. An elder in the Nasa Indigenous community we visited said it best: “Most importantly, we are peaceful people and we are our brothers and sisters. We have hope, not desperation; we have love, not hate; we uphold peace, not war; we work hard for a new and free Colombia; and we are an example of what that new and peaceful Colombia can look like.”

*Gabriela Flora is Project Voice Regional Organizer for the American Friends Service Committee. She was born in Colombia and is based out of the Denver office ([gflora@afsc.org](mailto:gflora@afsc.org), 303-623-3464). AFSC has been working in Colombia for ten years. To learn more about their work there, please visit: <http://www.afsc.org/colombia/>*

*DJPC and AFSC are founding members of the Colombia Solidarity Network. If you are interested in getting involved in Colombia issues here in Colorado, please join us (Contact [djpc@denjustpeace.org](mailto:djpc@denjustpeace.org), 303-623-1463, [www.denjustpeace.org](http://www.denjustpeace.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 keep receiving *The Mustard Seed* and/or to support our work, please return the slip below.

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For tax deductible contributions, please make checks out to "DJPC Education Fund." You can also donate online at [www.denjustpeace.org](http://www.denjustpeace.org).

## A Portrait of Survival: the Ixil Maya of the Guatemalan Sierra

A Photographic Exhibit presented  
at the Meadows Branch  
of the Boulder Public Library  
from March 2 - 31, 2005.

Barbara Millman, a photographer and former writer for the University of Colorado at Denver, visited the Indigenous peoples in 1997 to document their lives following a 36 year-long civil war.

The exhibit is sponsored by CAMINOS (Colorado/Maya Accompaniment Project of the Sierra), a program of the Denver Justice & Peace Committee.

For more information,  
call DJPC at 303.623.1463.

## Denver Justice and Peace Committee

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