

UPDATE on the AMERICAS

A bi-monthly publication of the Rochester Committee on Latin America

A Metro Justice Task Force

March/April 2007

Cuban Embargo: 45 years. Cuba Caravan: 18 years. Let's Help Again This Year to Break the Blockade!

by Vic Vinkey



Once again ROCLA plans to participate in the 18th annual Cuba Friendshipment Caravan, sponsored by IFCO/Pastors for Peace. As in previous years, one of their 14 routes will come through Rochester in early July, probably July 8th. In all they will visit 120 cities in the U.S. and Canada. As before, medicines, medical supplies and educational supplies are needed. Also, a special feature of this year is a bookmobile donated by a California community, so Spanish language books in good condition are also requested. Perhaps most important, we need money to pay for space on the Pastors for Peace truck. If we raise enough, we will be able to purchase cancer treatment medicines for the shipment, as we did last year.

Can you help? If you have a donation of material goods, money, or if you know of a potential source of such goods or wish to volunteer to help packing and loading, please contact Vic Vinkey at 271-8723. Checks should be made out to Metro Justice/ROCLA with Caravan or Friendshipment in the note space. Please do not use the word Cuba! Banks don't like it. Please mail your contribution to the Metro Justice office at 167 Flanders St., Rochester, NY 14619, Attention ROCLA.

Is Repression Returning to El Salvador?

On Wednesday, June 6, at 7 PM at the Downtown Presbyterian Church, Chava Redonnet will discuss the deteriorating human rights situation in El Salvador.

Chava is a seminarian at Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School and is part of the Catholic Worker community at St. Joe's. She is also a pulmonary researcher at the University of Rochester Medical Center and an author. Chava first went to El Salvador with a SHARE delegation in 2005 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the brutal murder of the four North American churchwomen. In January of this year she returned to El Salvador to work with a Baptist community in Santa Ana. She reports, "The people of this little church of the Salvadoran middle class (who would be the working poor here) are full of ideas and energy about how they can work to improve their community." Chava is organizing Rochester-area faith communities to be in relationship with this church group. Turn to page 3 to read about specific abuses documented in the Spring 2007 CISPES fact sheet.



Salvadoran students protest 1/31/07.
Photo from Leftspot.com

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ROCLA Programs and Actions Every First
Wednesday 7:00 PM Downtown Presbyterian
Church 121 N. Fitzhugh St.
Free and open to the public.
Wheelchair accessible

Metro Justice of Rochester, Inc.
THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE
ON LATIN AMERICA
167 Flanders St.
Rochester, NY 14619

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Maya Priests Banish the “Bad” Spirits Left by Bush

by Marilyn Anderson

My March trip to Guatemala was my first since 2003, and what I wanted to do and see this time was unending. Here are just a few highlights.

Referring to the recent visit of President Bush, CNN reported: Mayan Indian leaders have vowed to “spiritually cleanse” an ancient site in Guatemala after the Bush visit to the ruins at Iximche, a one-time capital of a Mayan group, as part of an effort to show the administration is interested in all its neighbors in the hemisphere. Iximche was the capital of the Kaqchiqueles kingdom before the Spanish conquest in 1524.

Mayan priests say they will purify the sacred archaeological site to rid it of any “bad spirits” after Bush is there.

“That a person like (Bush) - with the persecution of our migrant brothers in the United States, with the wars he has provoked — is going to walk in our sacred lands is an offense for the Mayan people and their culture,” said Juan Tiney, director of a Mayan non-governmental organization with close ties to Mayan religious and political leaders.

During my trip to Guatemala - from my talks with upper class individuals to those from simpler and less educated backgrounds — I found no Bush fans! While people did not approve of the Iraq war, their attention was especially focused on the Immigration Service raids in the US which are resulting in Guatemalan parents being separated from their children.

One of the most satisfying parts of my trip were visits with women's Fair Trade groups. For years, ROCLA has sold their items at the annual Alternative Fair. Seeing them in person gave me new energy to continue this effort.

I got a first hand look at the Hurricane Stan mudslide damage to Panabaj, a small town outside Santiago Atitlán. We heard the stories of women whose houses were destroyed. Wrong-headed government housing has been put up, which cost thousands of

dollars, yet has not met the needs of the people. Nor do these structures conform with their cultural patterns or even keep them out of possible future danger from new mudslides (ROCLA members contributed to a fund to help Panabaj storm victims during the 2005 Alternative Fair).

The brave women of Panabaj and several other towns, all of whom had endured hardship and tragedy of civil war in the 1980s, gave attention to fine workmanship and innovation while still keeping their own weaving alive, thus giving hope for the continuation of Maya traditions. One group had even obtained funding from UNESCO for an impressive weaving center.

Some of the coops I visited were located in remote areas. Access to them was made possible through my participation in a tour organized through my participation in a conference of the organization, WARP (Weave a Real Peace).

Finally, I met with a colleague in my Pro Arte Maya project - printing and distributing the Maya languages/ Spanish edition of my Maya Arts and Crafts of Guatemala coloring book. A new printing will be necessary next year - evidence that they are being used and appreciated. The Rafael Landívar University, which sponsors educational workshops for school teachers, has provided the coloring books to 775 rural schools!

New Sanctuary Movement Underway

A new Sanctuary Movement has been started in Los Angeles by Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE). ROCLA will be exploring ways to participate. From their website www.newsanctuarymovement.org:

The New Sanctuary Movement is a coalition of interfaith religious leaders and participating congregations, called by our faith to respond actively and publicly to the suffering of our immigrant brothers and sisters residing in the United States.

We acknowledge that the large-scale immigration of workers and their families to the United States is a complex historical, global and economic phenomenon that has many causes and does not lend itself to simplistic or purely reactive public policy solutions.

We stand together in our faith that everyone, regardless of national origin, has basic common rights, including but not limited to: 1) livelihood; 2) family unity; and 3) physical and emotional safety. We witness the violation of these rights under current immigration policy, particularly in the separation of children from their parents due to unjust deportations, and in the exploitation of immigrant workers. We are deeply grieved by the violence done to families through immigration raids. We cannot in good conscience ignore such suffering and injustice.

Therefore, We Covenant To:

- Take a public, moral stand for immigrants' rights
- Reveal, through education and advocacy, the actual suffering of immigrant workers and families under current and proposed legislation
- Protect immigrants against hate, workplace discrimination, and unjust deportation

ROCHESTER SAFE START

Hernan Escalante, member of the ROCLA Steering Committee, is Outreach Coordinator for ROCHESTER SAFE START, part of the Children's Institute. He is seeking audiences to educate the community about the Effects of Witnessing Violence in Children, and how professionals and family members can help. Safe Start reports that, in a survey of Rochester parents, it was found that one out of six reported that their children witnessed violence in their neighborhoods and/or in their homes.

Hernan is a compelling speaker, experienced in this field, and passionate about reducing violence on children in our community. Please contact him at 295-100 ext 283; cell phone 305-8485; hescalante@childrensinstitute.net.

Human Rights Violations in El Salvador Since the Installment of the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) CISPES Fact Sheet – Spring 2007

for more information go to www.cispes.org

Since the implementation and opening of the International Law Enforcement Academy in San Salvador in the Fall of 2005, the National Civilian Police (PNC) of El Salvador have shown themselves to be perpetuating more violence and exposing themselves as more corrupt, possibly being connected to resurging death squad-like structures. The Salvadoran social movement has pointed to the increased police violence against protesters, harsher laws against youth from marginalized communities, increased militarization of police, and the illegal approval of a US-sponsored International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) as indicators of the set-backs to the 1992 Peace Accords.

Below is a list of a broad range of human rights violations within the last year.

Criminalization of Student Protests.

On January 30, 2007, students held a protest against the recently approved Anti-Terrorism Law, which criminalizes forms of social protest rather than actual terrorist threats. Police presence during the protest was minimal, creating an image of the police as keeping order and looking out for the well-being of even the protesters. However, after the protest, police followed leaders of the youth organizations and coordinators of this protest to the surrounding municipalities where they live. There, the police arrested 9 of the youth including one minor. One youth leader was badly beaten before they were transferred to a police station in yet another municipality. The protesters were charged with public disorder, carrying of weapons and resisting arrest.

Negligence by Prison Officials as Riot Led to Riot and 21 Deaths. A riot took place on January 5, in the Apanteos Prison and for hours, prison officials did not intervene while a group of inmates murdered 21 other prisoners. Beatrice de Carrillo, Human Rights Ombudswoman, held a press conference in which she offered scathing criticism of the government's handling of the violence, saying the prison officials' actions in the case were negligent at best. She called on President Saca to immediately remove both the national head of prisons and the Apanteos director from office. Church officials and FMLN rep-

resentatives publicly denounced the irresponsibility and negligence of the directors of the prison system. Even the Organization of American States expressed its concern and called on Salvadoran President Saca to improve prison conditions.

Police Intimidation and Arrest of Activists in San Lorenzo.

Early in the morning of November 28, more than 600 police and 150 soldiers violently entered the community of San Lorenzo and arrested seven members of the "Committee of People Affected by the Storm Stan and the Ilamatepec Volcano Eruption." The community came together after being left homeless or devastated by the natural disasters, and was highly critical of the government's ineffective response. The police and military stormed into people's homes, intimidating both children and adults. The community then came together with ANTA (National Association of Agricultural Workers) and held a press conference the following day to denounce the arrests and the police intimidation.


Police Attack on CD/DVD Vendors Movement.

Also on November 28, 2006, in San Salvador, members of the CD/DVD Vendors Movement were attacked by police. The police raided the "pirated" CD/DVD vendors to enforce the CAFTA laws protecting intellectual property rights. During the confiscation of goods, the police beat and arrested various members of the organized Vendors movement. The police also threatened the movement leader for his organizing as they ransacked his home.

Lutheran Pastor and Wife Killed.

On November 4, 2006, Francisco Carrillo and Jesus de Carrillo, two religious leaders, human rights advocates, and activists in a local community volunteer rescue program, were shot and killed outside their church in the town of Jayaque, La Libertad. Francisco was a pastor in the Lutheran church; as he locked up after service, the assailants approached on bicycles and shot him and then his wife, who was waiting in a nearby car. The Carrillos were known for being vocal community activists and had recently received death threats for their work.

Catholic Priest Murdered. On September 25, 2006, the body of Father Ricardo Antonio Romero - parish priest of Santa Catarina Masahuat in the department of Sonsonate - was found on the highway to Acajutla. Father Ricardo was recognized as a priest who identified with the opposition and carried out the preferential option for the poor. Because there were no signs of robbery



¿Hugo Who?

A forum featuring Charles Hardy, author of *Cowboy in Caracas*, Daniel Hellinger, a political science professor from Webster University and national expert on Venezuelan politics, and Olivia Burlingame Goumbri, Executive Director of the Venezuela Information Office

7:00pm, May 2nd
School of the Arts
45 Prince Street
www.hugowho.org

Venezuela

CISPES Fact Sheet *(continued from page 3)*

at the crime scene, and because of his promotion of organizing and popular struggle, many believe that it was a politically motivated murder.

Youth Kidnapped for 1 week.

18-year old Luis Edgardo Osorto Gomez was kidnapped for 1 week in September 2006, after leaving his house to facilitate a youth meeting in Santa Rosa de Lima, department of La Union. Luis Edgardo is a student at the National Institute of Santa Rosa, and had been organizing a youth group, from which all the leaders have since deserted due to safety concerns. Luis Edgardo was also the son of a recognized FMLN activist in the area. His father received threatening calls in the previous weeks, in which he was told he was a "stubborn lefty" and that his son would pay. Luis Edgardo also reported having been followed by a black car with no license plates.

Riot Police Attack Water Privatization Protest.

On September 8, 2006, the Salvadoran riot police violently dispersed a peaceful protest in the Santa Eduvigis community, which had taken over the Carretera de Oro (one El Salvador's main highways) in the city of Soyapango. The community was demanding that the state-run water company ANDA take over the administration of the water system since the privately-run system was failing and the community had not received water in more than two months. The riot police attacked the community with teargas, despite the presence of children and the elderly, and later riot police sprayed pepper gas at community members who sat down in civil disobedience. Five people were beaten, captured and threatened with trials for public disorder.

Murder of FMLN leaders.

Alex Flores Montoya and Mercedes Peñate de Montoya, two well-known FMLN leaders, were found dead on August 23rd in the municipality of Coatepeque, department of Santa Ana. The husband and wife were traveling in their vehicle when they were intercepted by another vehicle. They were then forced to lay face down on the ground, each shot with a single bullet to the head, and abandoned in a nearby alley. Alex Flores Montoya was a teacher in two of the local public schools, and as an FMLN activist he served as the local FMLN board's adjunct coordinator and ran for municipal council with the FMLN in the March 2006 elections. Mercedes Peñate de Montoya was also a recognized FMLN activist and former candidate to the FMLN municipal council in the March 2000 elections.

Death Threats on Unions.

At the end of July, 2006, the water workers union (SETA) received a death threat that listed their union, as well as the public health care workers union (STISSS) and teachers union (ANDES), and signed by a group calling itself 'Viva mi mayor,' in reference to the well known and infamous founder of the Salvadoran death squads and of the ARENA party, Roberto D'Aubisson. The union held a press conference to publicize the intimidation attempts and called on the government to investigate and stop the threats. SETA has been very active in organizing a national coalition bringing together water workers, water users, environmentalists and other community activists in stop-

ping the government plans to halt water privatization, and union Secretary General Wilfredo Romero made clear that his union was targeted for its resistance to state policy.

July 5th Repression on Student Protest of Bus Fares.

On July 5, 2006, violence erupted during a student protest against bus fare hikes and led to the police occupation of El Salvador's National University (UES) for days, the emergency evacuation of more than 700 people, the capture of between 20 to 30 students, as well as a university administrator being gravely injured. The students were later released from jail due to lack of evidence, the police finally left the university, and on Tuesday a captured union leader was also released. The Human Rights Office called the violence instigated by the National Civilian Police (PNC) the "worst violation of human rights since the Peace Accords," and social movement organizations, human rights groups, and student groups called the government's response an unjustified use of force that representing a serious setback to the 1992 Peace Accords.

Killing of Manazares Elders.

On July 2, 2006, Francisco Antonio Manzanares, aged 77, and Juana de Manzanares, aged 75, parents of Radio Venceremos co-founder and recognized FMLN militant Marina Manzanares, were brutally tortured and murdered in their Suchitoto home early on the morning of July 1. Their death squad style assassinations sent shockwaves through the Salvadoran social movement.

Sources: La Prensa Grafica, Diario Colatino, Diario de Hoy, CISPES San Salvador Office, Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (Salvadoran Human Rights Defense Office)

Latin America Solidarity Movement to Hold 4th National Conference

By the time you read this newsletter ROCLA members Arnie Matlin and Peter and Gail Mott will have attended the 4th national conference of the Latin America Solidarity Coalition in Chicago from April 14-16.

For ten years ROCLA has supported the building of a national Latin America solidarity movement among the nearly 2000 groups of activists in all 50 states. Those groups are working with the people of Latin America and Mexico. In the next issue we will report on some of the forty-three workshops. A planned demonstration in solidarity with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers who were boycotting McDonalds has been cancelled because a victory has been announced. The fast food giant has agreed to pay a penny more per pound for the tomatoes they purchase, which will result in a needed raise for farm workers. The agreement is similar to that reached with Taco Bell 2 years ago, after a successful 4-year boycott.

Rice and Beans Dinner a Great Success!

by Arnie Matlin


Over a hundred people came to the Downtown Presbyterian Church on March 16th to participate in ROCLA's annual Rice and Beans dinner. It was obvious that people appreciated the fine food, the camaraderie, the music and tabling, and the opportunity to honor dedicated activists.

Local White Dove award winner Michael Argaman — a leader of Ciudad Hermana - gave a moving acceptance speech. Unfortunately, International White Dove Award winner Ambassador Magda Enriquez could not be present. (Dr. Enriquez is a very tough Sandinista, and it took both an earlier car accident and an ice storm on March 16th to keep her away.) Despite being in pain, and stranded in a motel room, Dr. Enriquez was able to send ROCLA a moving message that is reprinted in the next column.



ROCLA wishes to thank everyone who helped with setup and cleanup, brought desserts, bid on auction items, or—in some cases—did all of the above. We particularly want to thank Peg Gefell for preparing the food. Believe it or not, the rice and beans, cornbread and salad was even better (and also less expensive) than in previous years. We also thank Don Fairman of DUPC, John Honeck, Nancy & Dick Fitts, and Sue Schickler & Bob Good.

Exact figures aren't available yet, but we know ROCLA made over one thousand dollars on the dinner. ROCLA's annual Rice and Beans dinner is a high point in Rochester-area activist events, and we're looking forward to our next successful dinner in 2008.



¿Hugo Who?

7pm, May 2nd, School of the Arts, 45 Prince Street
www.hugowho.org

Dear Arnie:

I am writing to you from Williamsport where we had to pull off the road and check in a hotel due to the weather conditions. The snow is bad- they are expecting 12 inches here- the roads are not clean and there are too many accidents for us to continue to risk ourselves without having any guarantee that we would make it to Rochester. This has been a very hard trip for me with the accident and all. I cannot move my neck and I am in extreme pain, but I wanted to be there with you, that is why we decided to hit the road regardless of the weather. But... we cannot continue on the road under the present conditions!!

Please receive on my behalf and that of the FSLN the White Dove Award. You have no idea how much I wanted to be there with all of the wonderful brothers and sisters and good friends from Rochester.

In fact I made all my plans to come and lobby at the UN for our candidature to the UN's Human Rights Council around this date so that I could be there with you celebrating the love that has brought us together in an effort to give voice to the voiceless and hope to those who thought there was no hope for them in this world.

Please convey to all our friends, brothers and sisters, the profound love and solidarity the people of Nicaragua have for the people of the United States who have accompanied us in this long journey.

We are now proud to have a Government of National Reconciliation and National Unity, a government committed to work for all Nicaraguans regardless of party politics, so that no Nicaraguan goes hungry ever again; so that we have free education and health care for all; a roof over every one's head and jobs for the unemployed or underemployed.

To ensure National Reconciliation our Compañero Presidente Daniel has organized a National Council of Reconciliation and has asked Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo to preside. He has also invited Religious leaders of different denominations to join the Council. With God's blessing, we believe Nicaragua will be able to construct a brighter future!!

Free education for all has brought about an overwhelming number of children going to school. Parents no longer have to make decisions regarding how many kids they can afford to register. They registered them all for free!!! Which is fantastic and we are extremely happy for that....but we now do not have enough schools!!!! We are now teaching under tarps, in churches and homes!! What is going to happen when the rainy season comes???? We need safe roofs, prefabricated classrooms...we need help!!!

Continued on last page

UPDATE on the AMERICAS

A bi-monthly publication of the Rochester Committee on Latin America

Todd Bauer Reports

[Todd (from Webster, NY) coordinates a tree nursery and does water projects in San Idelfonso Ixtahuacán, in the department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala.]

Hola to Everyone,

All is well here. It is the middle of the dry season now. We take advantage of this time to work in the nursery and build rain water catchment systems in the countryside.

Recently we had the opportunity of work with a campesino on a water related project. For those of you who remember a letter about the 'bicibomba,' this project is similar, but with a few differences: The campesino position is now filled by a woman who doesn't know how to ride a bike - and didn't want to learn. Doña Catarina Domingo Hernández, resident of the La Vega Colotenango, is a mother and a widower who has raised her children, 2 sons and 6 daughters, growing vegetables, mostly onions and wild greens. On her property there was a small spring where she, year after year during the dry season, would draw out bucket after bucket of water to irrigate her raised beds of veggies. After seeing the bicibomba at her daughter house, she decided to talk with the Pastoral Social agricultural promoter who has been accompanying her in her work for the last few years and ask about the possibility of her own bicibomba but without the bici. After talking with her and meeting her family, we decided to go ahead with the project. The next day, the digging began to improve her existing spring/well. With a little luck on her part the water vein was discovered and the water quantity tripled in her well. The final storage size is about 4m³ or 1000 gallons with a recharge of less than 24 hours. Water or the difficulty with irrigation is no longer the limiting factor. She is able to plant the amount of land that she and her daughters can cultivate. In 20 minutes they can fill their 450 liter storage tank and begin the use the sprinklers. A few days later we could see the seedlings germinating in the new area that she planted.

I hope you enjoyed this small success story. It shows us that, with a little assistance and hard work on the 'benefactors' part, positive changes in people's lives can occur. Now Doña Catarina will be able to plant more land and have a greater variety of crops which improves her family's diet while at the same time adding to her income.

URGENT ACTION Support HR 1707!

Call, send a letter or e-mail to your representative now! Thanks to your actions and pressure on Congress, Rep. Jim McGovern introduced HR 1707 on March 27, with 72 original co-sponsors! This new legislation would suspend operations at the SOA/WHINSEC and investigate the association of torture and human rights abuses associated with the school. Ask your Representative to co-sponsor this legislation. Visit the Legislative Action Index on the SOA website (info@soaaw.org) to learn more about how you can get involved.

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton
3280 Federal Building
Rochester, NY 14614

Senator Charles Schumer
3040 Federal Building
100 State St.
Rochester, NY 14614

Starting Schools in Guatemala

[Ed. note: As readers will remember, Randall Shea grew up in this area, had an early career in the business world, lived for several years in Nicaragua, accompanied Guatemalans returning home from Chiapas after the brutal civil war, settled in Santa María Tzejá, and married Juana, who was then a law student. They have three lovely daughters. Randall started an elementary school that is successful and expanding; and he now has written a Proposal for the construction of a Community High School in Santa María Tzejá (For a full copy of the proposal write to interconnect_mott@frontiernet.net).]

Dear Family and Friends,

My family and I send you many greetings and our best wishes from Guatemala...We enjoyed seeing many of you when we were in the United States and Canada this past fall.

I will limit my report to talk about some of the progress we have been making in our efforts to establish a high school in our village. I began working in earnest on this project in the spring of 2006. From May through September I conducted 54 interviews with village leaders, university students, etc. to identify our collective vision of the type of high school we will want to try to create. Based on our findings I then wrote up a proposal...In January, we coordinated a meeting of over 50 village leaders...On February 25th, we held a second meeting with leaders from the different village organizations, and all of the recommendations in our final proposal were accepted and ratified.

The next phase of the work will be to gather all the information necessary to start a high school specializing in one or more of the four fields of study that were approved:

- Health related studies, like Nursing
- Environmental Studies / Natural Resource Management
- Agronomy (farming) and Agro Forestry
- Teaching

In this phase, we will be visiting other high schools in Guatemala that are already offering these fields of study and doing so successfully. We may also visit schools located in other countries in Central America or perhaps in Mexico. Based on what we learn during these visits, and during talks with Ministry of Education officials and many other persons involved in educational work, we will begin to design programs that incorporate the best of all that we see.

Thanks as always for your interest and support.
Peace and Grace,

Randall Shea
March 6, 2007

Rep. James Walsh
1180 Canandaigua Rd.
Palmyra, NY 14522

100 State St.
Rochester, NY 14614

Rep. Thomas Reynolds
1577 West Ridge Rd.
Rochester, NY 14615

Rep. John Kuhl, Jr.
PO Box 153
Bath
NY 14810
The Capitol Switchboard number is (202) 224-3121.

Rep. Louise Slaughter
312- Federal Building

SARAH AND KEVIN REPORT FROM HAITI

by Sarah Brownell

[This is excerpted because of space. Full account – and well worth reading! - from interconnect_mott@frontiernet.net]

“Yesterday we drove from Borgne to Cap Haitien with Ti Mano and Johnny, two of the three newly inaugurated mayors of Borgne, to make video of the state of the road. We will present it to those responsible in Cap Haitien. The road is the economic lifeline of Borgne and points west, with household supplies, clothes, shoes, school supplies, gas, etc. coming in, and produce and charcoal for the markets in Cap Haitien or Port-au-Prince going out.

“The trucks that make the trip are huge—picture something like a hay truck in the US, but filled with supplies and 100 people on top of the supplies and more people sitting on the tops of the side rails, ducking under low hanging branches. They are painted in bright colors and often given names like “God is good” or “God before us” or “Thanks Mom”. We filmed one of these full trucks as it slid 50 feet backwards down the steep mountain road at Chicano because the rocks were covered by a thin layer of clay mud from the torrential rains we’ve been having. On the second try, 15 people tied straps to the front bumper and literally pulled the truck up the hill. We pushed the little Sidekick we were traveling in up the hill as it burned rubber and shot black smoke out the tailpipe. People passing by joked that we should just pick it up and carry it.

“After Chicano, the road is rough but passable until Novion. You just have to hold your breath when you cross the rickety bridge at a place called Bak in case the spindly legs under it give way or a truck wheel falls through one of the holes in the deteriorating cement surface. In Novion you reach a 1-2 mile stretch of road that is nearly impassable. It is low land with a lot of standing water and ruts 2-3 feet deep filled with mud. We got out of the Sidekick and started to walk, and the Sidekick returned to Borgne. Usually everyone jumps down off the big truck too and walks, stopping periodically to rock the truck, throw rocks under the wheels for traction, or push it with all their might. Parts of the road are not even passable on foot unless we take off our shoes and go knee deep in the mud...As we are walking, the big truck swims by us, looking like a fish wiggling through the mud.

“The road from Bayer to Cap Haitien has been repaired by the United Nations in the last two years. The remainder of the road project, which is supposed to pass Borgne and continue all the way to Plaisance, has now been turned over to the Haitian government. Their efforts are currently focused on building gutters on the half of the road closest to Cap and on building a desperately needed bridge over the river at Bayer. Whenever it rains, the river rises to levels that the trucks cannot pass. When this happens, all the sacks of rice, bags of cement, barrels of gasoline, bunches of bananas, sacks of charcoal, live goats, etc. have to be removed from one big truck, carried by canoe across the river, and put on another truck waiting on the other side. However, once you’ve passed the river at Bayer, you have a very good chance of reaching Cap without having to ditch your

baggage on the side of the road or walk for miles.

“More than two weeks ago, we bought 45 bags of cement, roofing, iron rebar, etc for the SOIL demo dry toilets and 41 bags of cement and enough pipe to finish the Chicano water project. Short of carrying 86 bags of cement by canoe and then a mile on foot, we are not sure how to get the supplies to Borgne.

“Yesterday was the UV Tube workshop in Cap Haitien. We invited about 16 people from different groups and the doctor from the prison in Cap and together we built 5 UV tubes. It was a blast and I think everyone enjoyed themselves. Kevin cooked us up some delicious Haitian beans and rice, chicken and Kreyol sauce.”

Immigration Crises and Migrant Farmworkers

The April ROCLA’s April meeting highlighted the recent escalation of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)* raids on nearby farms. Agents are identifying, arresting and deporting migrant workers.

With compelling examples, Luis Torres, WNY Director of Rural and Migrant Ministry (supported in recent years by ROCLA) and Kathy Castania, a MultiCultural specialist and consultant who worked with the Cornell Migrant program for decades, talked with us about the situation. They provided us with information about the impact of fear in farmworker communities, the impact of past and present legislation, what is just and comprehensive reform, and a context for current movements for a just policy. They spoke of non-citizen parents being taken by surprise, arrested, jailed, and often separated from their children. Across the nation this policy has resulted in the children, if they are US citizens, being left in the US without their parents who are deported without being able to see them. In discussion afterwards, Roberto Resto told us about a Rochester-area Emergency Response System being planned to counter local immigration raids, deportations, and repressive activities by ICE.

*Formerly INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service)

Background information: Rural and Migrant Ministry acts to overcome the prejudices and poverty that degrades and debilitates all members of our society, by building community that celebrate diversity, achieve true mutuality and offer dignity and opportunity to all. We send out this information to support different Western NY strives to stand in solidarity with the rural and migrant communities for a just world. If you have information you would like to share please send it to ltorres@ruralmigrantministry.org. You can get more information about Rural and Migrant Ministry at its website: www.ruralmigrantministry.org

SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, June 24, Bienvenida, Brockport, NY
Come join in the festivities as our community welcomes back the workers whose efforts put food on our tables. Everyone is welcome at these free community events. Sponsored by Brockport Ecumenical Outreach Committee (BEOC). For more information please contact Grace Carson at (585) 964-3956.

Alison Clarke Honored in the Dominican Republic

Alison reports: "For the last several years I have spent time in the Dominican Republic near the border of Haiti where my friend Joanne Peterson has been living and working in various parishes for almost 25 years. She has facilitated almost 50 Christian Base Communities (Comunidades de Basa), a process of reflecting on ones' life through social, economic and political lenses, after which they look at what the Bible has to say on the issue. It is a very empowering process to say the least.

Projects around aqueducts for clean water, preventative health care and education continue to be addressed, but the one some of us have been supporting with fundraising most recently is Agricultural Nurseries. Forty-six independent Farmer and Women's Associations have "bought into" this project. Each of the proposed nurseries will teach up to 60 farmers organic production of avocados, citrus, coffee and cocoa trees providing skills and good food. The trees are then planted on the hillsides to counter the devastating deforestation.

"In raising money for the Ag. Nursery Project, I approached the National Council of Churches Agricultural Missions Program for Latin America. After hard questioning to show the sustainability of the project, they gave \$3000 funding. Since their annual gathering was to be in Santo Domingo this year with representatives from various farm ministries in the US and other countries, four of our farmers from El Cercado who have helped build the nurseries, Joanne and I were invited to that meeting.

"The theme of the AG Missions gathering was international cultural racism. Since Haitian families were brought to the DR to cut sugar cane back in the sixties by then President Trujillo, communities were built then called Bateys. Now there is no more cane but broken down

housing, unclean water, very few schools and generations of children born in the Dominican Republic of Haitian descent have no human right, including going to school! Recently the Interamerican Court decreed that these people be given citizenship, but it will take education, advocacy and time to make that happen.

"Before leaving for the Capital, Joanne wanted us to see a completed Ag. Nursery in Vallecito. As usual, when visitors come, 30 farmers came to greet us and tell about the building of the nursery. Suddenly amidst photos and dissertation by an elder farmer, I realized they were dedicating the nursery to me. A plaque in English was given me and another in beautiful ironwood in Spanish was displayed in the nearby Farmers Association building. My tears of joy flowed with thankfulness for these campesinos who have so much to teach us, and for the many people, including the Rochester Committee on Latin America, who have sent monies for this holistic project."

[Ed. Note: Alison was a co-founder of ROCLA, started the Sanctuary movement in Rochester, and, among many other things, was a founder Rochester Roots - formerly Politics of Food.]

Rice and Beans *(continued from page 5)*

The same is happening with health care. The Cubans are going to help us with doctors. In fact they are already educating Nicaraguans in the medical field and sending doctors to help out now!! The Venezuelans are also helping!! However we need to find the medicines. People cannot afford to buy medicines...we need help!!!

That is why we are trying to find this help anywhere we can. In fact that is why we want to invite you to join our plea to the Government of the United States to contribute with 300 million dollars to help solve the problems of hundred of thousands of ex-contras whose needs have never been fulfilled. Three hundred thousand dollars is a lot less than the 17 billion the International Court of Justice said the US should pay Nicaragua. Please help this plea become a reality!!! It would be of great help!!

I want to invite everyone who wanted to ask me questions to do so by email. Please let them know they can write to me at <menriquez@cancilleria.gob.ni>

I will love to hear from everyone I wanted to hug today!!! Please continue with your wonderful work!!

Arnie, once again, Thank you!!!!

*Love,
Magda*

*Dra. Magda Enriquez-Beitler
Embajadora Direccion General de Organismos [Organizations]
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la Republica de
Nicaragua*

ROCHESTER COMMITTEE ON LATIN AMERICA (ROCLA)

ROCLA for many years has sought to be a bridge between the Rochester community and the people of Latin America. Monthly meetings on the 1st Wednesday of each month at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church provide an opportunity to learn more about what is going on in that part of the world. In addition to providing information, ROCLA is committed to working for systemic justice and supports numerous organizations that are on the front line of this endeavor. School of the Americas Watch, the Mexico Solidarity Network, Rights Action and the Rochester Labor Film Festival are among the many groups that receive assistance and encouragement.

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Update on the Americas Publishing Team

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