

UPDATE on the AMERICAS

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

A Taskforce of Metro Justice

Fall/Winter 2010

Crafts and Calendars to Brighten Your Life at the Alternative Fair: December 3 and 4

— by Marilyn Anderson

Purchases at ROCLA's tables help support members of three (Samajel Batz, and UPAVIM) Fair Trade women's cooperatives in Guatemala. The recent hurricanes in Guatemala affected one coop's members - some of whose homes were destroyed. Buying their products helps them to recover. At this year's Fair, we will offer their hand woven napkins to help you make your table more ecological and colorful place mats that will lift your spirit. Our practical dish size trivets (made from ecological materials) will protect your table. We offer palm baskets with a cover to keep your bread or tortillas warm. Gorgeous pine needle baskets may be used for practical or as decorative objects. Shoulder bags and charming baby bibs make wonderful gifts. Some creative jewelry made from recycled materials will surprise you. ROCLA sell crafts only one or twice a year and we have a number of items not available elsewhere in Rochester.

Your purchases of this year's art calendar—with reproductions of the paintings of Maya artists—benefit these talented individuals. And NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala),

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No December ROCLA meeting. ROCLA Steering Committee will meet on Wednesday, Dec. 1, 5:30 PM at DPC.

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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 Free parking across the street in City Hall Parking Lot

Metro Justice Education Fund
THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE
ON LATIN AMERICA
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a short history of war

— by John (Lory) Ghertner, M.D.

[Ed. note: In March of this year Lory Ghertner received ROCLA's Local White Dove Award "in appreciation of the breadth and depth of his work organizing, protecting and advocating for the Hispanic migrant worker community of Western New York, and for his tireless efforts for Comprehensive Immigration Reform."]

I am not an historian, but I do know that in the history of war, battles were fought along well-defined lines. The trenches of WWI, the Maginot Line built as a result and which failed in WWII. All the maps of battlefields, ancient and modern, with clear depictions of colored lines and arrows showing movements of troops, horses, and tanks.

Then came the debacles of Vietnam and Afghanistan. And the streets of Sodus. And the many rural communities around Rochester. And even the train stations in Rochester.

Although there may be an ethical line which we should not cross, there is no physical line, not even a legal line anymore. The battlefields are where unauthorized farmworkers and factory workers, domestic workers and day laborers, and construction workers and hotel workers live. We have an army on the street in SUVs instead of Humvees; they still carry armament, but some of these weapons are our pathological laws, regulations, and decrees, which our agents of the Department of Homeland Security carry around as powerful as rifles.

News reporters no longer tell us about families destroyed, lives ruined, or economies disrupted. Our Border Patrol agents still look for anyone not American, and our ICE agents still come with false warrants looking to round up workers. US citizens are being handcuffed and thrown against their cars or on the ground. Children are being ripped from the arms of their parents. Latinos are being asked for identification with no provocation in stores, on our streets, and on our trains. President Obama's team of despots proudly announce the huge numbers of unauthorized people they have arrested, including the more than 200,000 who have not been detained for a crime. And multiply that by the number of wives and children and families both here and in their home countries who depend on their wages and you have destruction of family life for many people.

And now because our employers cannot find enough seasonal labor H-2A visa workers from Jamaica and Haiti have arrived in the area. A perfect Petri dish experiment of potential slavery. The good farm owners watch out for their employees, pay them well, give them decent housing, and even protect them from potential problems. But there are too many farmworkers here right now who are living in poor housing, being fed poorly, and are being paid less than what they were contracted. They have no transportation other than their feet; they cannot complain about their living conditions because if they are fired, they lose their right to be in this country; they cannot complain to the Department of Labor or to service agencies for the same reason. They are enslaved in their work environment, not making enough money to support their families back home.

Sacred cultures are being destroyed. The Mexican lifestyle of truthfulness and close warm families. The Jamaican rhythm of

life. Even our census bureau will not consider Latino a race and yet their brown skin, their high cheekbones, and their straight soft black hair make them a target.

Yes, there is no linear battlefield but there is a war being waged. A war of hatred and bigotry. A war of distrust and shame. A war of political expedience and of false rhetoric.

Our latest stand will be an onslaught on the White House. With the help of the New York Immigration Coalition, we will be sending thousands of pens for President Obama for his use to sign a decree to stop breaking up families, to allow children to go to school, to allow all the people in this country their constitutional rights.

Please contact me at nghertner@verizon.net if you wish to have your name on a pen demanding the resolution of this war on innocent people. The goal is to send 11,000 pens to the White House before December 10th, International Human Rights Day.

John (Lory) Ghertner, MD
Migrant Support Services of Wayne County
Sodus, NY 14551

Racial Profiling by Border Patrol Agents

"The Lake Shore Limited runs between Chicago and New York City without crossing the Canadian border. But when it stops at Amtrak stations in western New York State, armed Border Patrol agents routinely board the train, question passengers about their citizenship and take away non-citizens who cannot produce satisfactory immigration papers."

(This from the *New York Times* of August 29, 2010.)
Martin Luther King said, in his famous 1963 letter from the Birmingham jail: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

How can ROCLA members respond to this unjust situation? If you feel moved to do something, please:

Rochester residents can contact Rochester City Council members to complain.

Contact Amtrak (1-800-872-7245), Greyhound (585-232-5121), and Trailways (585-454-2200) to complain and tell them you will not use their services.

Write or call your Congresspeople.

If you travel by bus or train **we would like to hear if you see Border Patrol agents and we would like to know what they do.** Because of complaints of racial profiling agents are now asking everyone for IDs. To refuse is your fourth amendment right, so we hope you will refuse their request.

If you have something to report please contact Dr. Lory Ghertner right away. He can be reached on his cell phone, 585 733 3171, almost 24 hrs a day.



The United States of America Presents....

CONSTANT WAR IN LATIN AMERICA

Sept. 2010



Resistance and the FBI

— by Vicki Ryder

Exercising your right – and your responsibility – to dissent is the highest form of patriotism, in keeping with the grandest of American traditions.

Therefore, it is outrageous that the FBI conducted early-morning raids, with guns drawn, on eight homes across our nation last week, terrorizing the families who lived there and sending a clear signal that dissent is now considered a danger to our country.

The targeted families were guilty of nothing more than speaking out against the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and against the unjust treatment of Palestinians and Colombians. Showing support and compassion for repressed populations is not an act of terrorism. In fact, it will do more to combat terrorism than all our guns and bombs ever will do.

The recent FBI actions are an affront to every American and an assault on your Constitutional rights, and must be condemned by everyone who values freedom and liberty.

Letters of protest can be sent to the Department of Justice and to the White House. If you treasure your freedoms, please write today.

[Ed. note: You can listen to Vicki performing “Help Me Understand” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VfS5sji-lm0>), a song that she says “bubbled up in me in July 2010 when I heard that the U.S. was sending 7,000 Marines and 46 warships to Costa Rica to fight a ‘war on drugs. I’m 68 years old, and my country’s been waging one war or another my whole life! Enough!”]

“Know Your Rights” information from the National Lawyers Guild

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) and its Mass Defense Committee provides legal defense and educational resources to activists, including those subjected to the September 24 raids and grand jury subpoenas.

The Guild denounces the attacks on free speech, freedom of association, and the right to dissent that these actions represent. The raids and summonses reflect escalating hostility toward individuals and groups working in solidarity with the Palestinian and Colombian people and are blatantly political attacks on peaceful activists.

The NLG offers several resources for activists who are subject to similarly aggressive and politically motivated breaches of their rights.

NLG Hotline: 888-NLG-ECOL (888-654-3265)

-A hotline for U.S. activists who have been contacted by the FBI. Callers are matched with NLG defense attorneys in their states who have experience dealing with similar cases.

Know Your Rights Brochure: www.nlg.org/resources/know-your-rights
<<http://www.nlg.org/resources/know-your-rights>> -A two-page brochure that summarizes the rights of citizens when they are contacted or stopped by the police or federal authorities. Available in English, Spanish and other languages.

ROCLA Co-Sponsors

Human Rights Day December 10, 2010 “Community in Conversation – Are Immigrant Rights Human Rights?”

“Community in Conversation – Are Immigrant Rights Human Rights?” is an attempt to understand some of the complex issues involved in immigration, in the hope that understanding may bring real solutions that will benefit us as a community. Our panel is prepared to engage us in a passionate – but civil - conversation about an issue that ultimately affects us all.

Aly Wane (Syracuse Peace Council): “*The Economics of Immigration: who benefits under the current system?*”

Peter Mares (Director of LA CASA: Transitional housing for migrant farmworkers and their families, and former farmworker): “*A Migrant Perspective*”

Wally Ruehle (Immigration Law Specialist, Legal Aid Society of Rochester): “*The Legal Perspective*”

Bishop Prince Singh (Episcopal Diocese of Rochester): “*The Moral Perspective*” and Wrap-up

Written questions

The Faces of the Conversation

Photographs will be an integral part of the program because they can convey what words cannot. Joseph Sorrentino, photographer and writer, will fill one wall with photos of women and men in rural Mexico. Loret Steinberg, Associate Professor of Photographic Arts and Sciences at RIT, will display photographs of migrant workers in our midst, taken by her and her students.

Both artists are deeply committed to the cause of immigration reform and most especially to the people themselves; both use their profession to enlighten their audience by (literally) exposing us to the reality of what is often an academic discussion.

CPT in Colombia: the October Program

[Ed. note: This piece written by ROCLA friend Emily Good, who gave us permission to excerpt it from an article in the indymedia newsletter: <http://rochester.indymedia.org/newswire/display/26524/index.php>]

Alix Lozano, leader of the Mennonite church of Colombia, along with Eloy Garcia and Christopher Knestrick, members of the Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) in Colombia, spoke about their work at ROCLA's October meeting.

The CPT has been doing accompaniment work in Colombia since 2000, especially in the north-central Magdalena River region. The US government has sent more than \$6 billion in aid under the dirty war called "Plan Colombia." Five million people have been displaced from their land. It is the most dangerous place in the world to be a union organizer: More than 300 Colombian activists were assassinated in 2009 alone.

Despite mineral riches, good farm land, and ports on both oceans, most Colombians have not benefited from their country's development. Many campesinos still live without basic sanitation, health care, and infrastructure. Most of the US aid goes to the military and toward protecting natural resource extraction industries, benefiting only the elite.

Alix Lozano said, "Three generations of my family have lived in the context of war." Seven military bases, placed strategically near oil and mineral reserves, are in the process of being opened to further use by the US. Under the deal, US military personnel would use them for at least ten years. As the US presses the Santos government to push it through, Colombian civil society and other countries in the region raise their voices in opposition. On the 23rd of August, more than 3000 women held a vigil outside Palenquero, condemning the effects of increased military presence in their communities. Legal immunity would be granted to all US military personnel and private contractors for any crime committed within the country.

The leaders of every other nation in South America also oppose intensified US military presence in Colombia, demonstrating growing unity among their populist governments and willingness to stand up against the US superpower. The bases in Colombia serve to maintain tension on a continent over which the US is quickly losing influence.

A report released this summer by the Fellowship of Reconciliation documents that human rights abuses and illegal military killings correlate directly with US military aid. Under the US Leahy Law, military units that commit human rights abuses with impunity cannot receive US government funds. Yet they do.

Audience members asked the team what they think of the recent election of a new President, Manuel Santos. Although Santos presents himself more diplomatically than Uribe, his support comes from the same large landowners and upper class, and he carries the same hard-line military mindset.

Focused on expanding the economy, Santos has taken some steps to revive relationships with neighboring countries, normalizing trade with Venezuela and vowing to sign a free-trade agreement with the US after the November elections.

Economic growth happens at the expense of the land and naturaleza. Mining is the most obvious big, dangerous, and destructive business. But Colombian companies are also cashing in on the boom in palm oil: catastrophic to forests throughout the world. The oil, used in countless ways, from high-end beauty products to food and biofuel, is produced on huge tree plantations that often displace subsistence farming communities.

One such community, Las Pavas, is at the center of a CPT campaign. In mid-2009, Colombia's largest palm oil production company, Daabon, forcibly evicted 123 families from their land to plant trees for palm oil. The company was the primary supplier of palm oil for The Body Shop, which markets itself as a cruelty-free retailer. The people of Las Pavas asked CPT to wage a nonviolent campaign to reclaim their land, and their efforts are working! Under pressure, The Body Shop stopped doing business with Daabon, and the families of Las Pavas are one step closer to returning.

Colombians' continued survival and struggle to fight for human rights and land rights provide the rest of the world with inspiration to keep up our own battles: we are all connected. Thanks to the informative, moving work of CPT and Alix Lozano, Colombian peoples' stories have given at least one demoralized activist new hope.

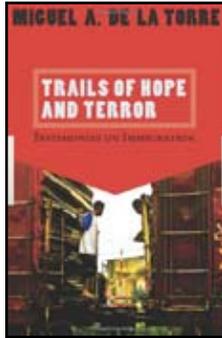
**La Bienvenida a Su Bebé!
WELCOME! BYEN VINI!
Aniela Dorothy Foos
September 22, 2010, 11:08 pm
6 lbs 14 oz**

Kevin and I are happy to announce the arrival of our "Aniela" (messenger from God) who has blessed us with renewed hope. We're all home now, happy and healthy and practicing and learning how to be a family. Thank you for all your prayers, good wishes, and help in preparing for her arrival! – Sarah Brownell

Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration

— a book review by George Dardess

Miguel De La Torre, director of the Justice and Peace Institute at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a book that is compelling and necessary both for those long familiar with the tragedy of immigration as well as for those informing themselves of the tragedy for the first time.



The wide reach of *Trails of Hope and Terror* follows from two wise decisions by the author: first, to allow the ongoing story of migrant workers to be told through the voices or “testimonies” of the workers themselves and of those most directly engaged in helping them; and second, to arrange the voices thematically according to Liberation Theology’s pattern of *ver-juzgar-actuar* (see-judge-act). We examine the facts on the ground and evaluate their implications according to a Christian faith perspective before we undertake a response. So the book opens with a section on “Creating Borders and Their Consequences,” which introduces us to the often deadly realities of the border crossing from northern Mexico through Arizona’s Sonoran Desert. We look next at “Economic Realities,” where we learn about the role NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) played in creating the migrant flow in the first place. In the next section, “Demythologizing the Immigration Debate,” we hear voices distinguishing between the facts about migrants’ presence in the US and the misconceptions spun by anti-immigrant forces. In the next three sections, “Family Values,” “The Politics of Fear,” and “Christian Perspectives,” we move into the book’s evaluative stage. The final section, “Ethical Responses,” tells us of actions already taken to counteract the inhumanity of our current immigration policy (or lack thereof) and encourages us to undertake even more creative, courageous, and faith-filled actions in the future. De La Torre introduces each section with his own perspective on the topic and ends each section with “The Voice of the People,” consisting of a poem, photo, or picture by or about the migrants themselves.

The book’s structure humanizes what might otherwise have been a still worthwhile but inevitably a less engaging and less helpful presentation. Immigration has become a tragedy precisely because it possesses no human face. It has become the latest casualty of the ongoing ideological warfare between Left and Right. Human beings disappear into slogans and myths. Fear drives the agenda instead of patience and compassion. *Trails of Hope and Terror* goes a long way to free us from this hopeless dead end. (Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 2009.)

Pioneering Education in Guatemala: An update from Randall Shea, summer 2010

Juana Maurilia [Randall’s wife] is keeping very busy as she is working two different jobs, as a literacy teacher for adult women in the mornings, and as the guidance counselor in the middle school in the afternoons.

Construction of a New Village Library: Randall is part of the leadership team that is overseeing this construction which is well underway.



Village University Student Update: In updating his statistics Randall said “we now have 72 young women and men from our village who are studying or have studied at the university level. This is an extraordinary achievement for a village from the remote Ixcán region of Guatemala. 36 of the 72 students are women and 36 are men.



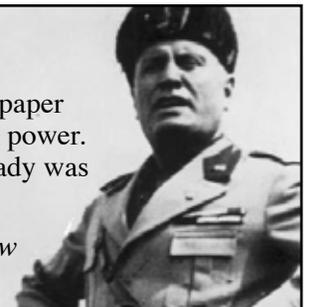
Rolanda shown with her husband Emiliano Panjoj and their daughter. Emiliano was our first village university graduate and has his degree in Natural Resource Management.

The High School Project: “Work continues to move forward in our efforts I am president of the committee that is leading the effort to build and operate a high school with a university extension in our village, and we continue to have the outstanding support of two of my former students, graduate architect Nazario Gutiérrez and Aurelio Canil, a civil engineering student. Our plan is to have a total of about 450 students from all over the Ixcán.”

Mussolini’s definition of fascism:

When you can’t put a cigarette paper between political and corporate power. (He assumed media power already was his.)

— from Amy Goodman interview with John LeCarre.



ROCLA on Immigration

The Rochester Committee on Latin America (ROCLA) embraces a comprehensive approach for immigration reform that includes, at the very minimum:

1. an opportunity for hard-working immigrants who are already contributing to this country to come out of the shadows, regularize their status upon satisfaction of reasonable criteria, and, over time, pursue an option to become lawful permanent residents and eventually United States citizens;
2. reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited;
3. the creation of legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner with their rights fully protected;
4. border protection policies that are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of identifying and preventing entry of terrorists and dangerous criminals, as well as pursuing the legitimate task of implementing American immigration policy;
5. a call for living wages and safe working conditions for workers of United States-owned companies in other countries;
6. a call for greater economic development in poor countries to decrease the economic desperation, which forces the division of families and migration.



mdecpov.org

El Museo del Barrio Looking South, Not East, Into New York's Past

— Excerpted from an article By Edward Rothstein, September 16, 2010, New York Times

Something unusual happens as you work through “Nueva York (1613-1945),” which opens on Friday at El Museo del Barrio (in collaboration with the New-York Historical Society). You enter feeling fairly sure of geographic bearings and leave less certain, curious, challenged. And can anything more be hoped for from a museum exhibition?

Instead of viewing the city and its past along an East-West axis and seeing its conflicts and culture through interactions with European-born colonizers and immigrants, the



Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

“From Here to There,” an installation by Antonio Martorell made to resemble the airplanes that brought many Puerto Ricans to New York, in “Nueva York (1613-1945),” at El Museo del Barrio.

exhibition rotates our attention 90 degrees. We look along the North-South axis, toward Mexico, the Caribbean and South America.

That is also the axis along which immigration and cultural influence have accumulated in recent decades, leading to a growing Hispanic presence in the city and in American life, which is what gives this exhibition more than historical importance. ...[It is] the reinterpretation of New York's relationship to the Southern Hemisphere through an unusual accumulation of artifacts, paintings, political cartoons, clothing, music, books and photographs, which reshape the city's history. churches from the city.

El Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Avenue, at 104th Street, East Harlem; through Jan. 9; (212) 831-7272, elmuseo.org.

The Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC) Vs. Increasing US Militarization of Latin America

— by Peter Mott

ROCLA participates in and supports the LASC which currently is closely watching these “hot spots” in Latin America:

- **HONDURAS.** The military coup continues in the form of large-scale popular Resistance which is repressed violently by the army and police. The illegal election and new government, almost certainly sponsored by the US, is still not recognized by the OAS, the UN, or any other country in South America.
- **ECUADOR.** The uprising last month was probably not a coup but a violent police strike/revolt. President Correa was held captive for 12 hours until loyal parts of the army broke in to free him. Rumor of US backing of this coup is not well-founded.
- **COLOMBIA.** The US-Colombia agreement to let US troops into seven military bases has been found invalid by the Constitutional court. Protests in Colombia and here have led Colombia’s new president to suspend the agreement for now.
- The US 4th Fleet has been reactivated by the Bush and Obama administrations. Our ships now patrol South America. A month ago Costa Rica was faced with a planned voyage of 26 US warships and 7,000 marines to their shore to help, supposedly, with the drug war. Huge protests here and in Costa Rica stopped that plan completely.
- **PANAMA.** The US has two new naval bases there.

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.

ROCLA Steering Committee

Marilyn Anderson, Peg Gefell, Marilyn and Bob Kaiser, John Locke, Arnie Matlin, Sandy Morales, Peter and Gail Mott, Vic Vinkey, Tom Ward, Callie Rabe

Update on the Americas Publishing Team

Editors: Gail and Peter Mott; Designer: John Locke

¡Presente! Bob Thompson

A long time member and supporter of ROCLA, Bob Thompson was a frequent participant in the Pastors for Peace program. In addition, he and his wife Sylvia traveled to Central and South America with concerned groups from Witness for Peace. His military experiences in two wars led him to seek alternatives to international disputes through his activities with Veterans for Peace. As parents, Bob and Sylvia passed on to their five children his deep concern for the needy and the oppressed. They, in turn, have pursued careers in the service of others in education and medicine, and with organizations such as Oxfam and United Universalist International Resources. In fact, Bob’s daughter Martha was a recipient of the White Dove Award in 2003. Those of us in AI Group #191 continue to be inspired by his commitment and his friendship. Art Smith, Don Zimmer, Barb Deming

¡Presente! Rev. Lucius Walker

Friends of Latin America and Cuba lost a great activist, Rev. Lucius Walker, on September 7, 2010. As the chairman of “Pastors for Peace,” the organization Lucius founded, said, “He went about in his quiet methodical way, not raising his voice but making his point. He fought calmly and courageously. He deplored violence, and he always thought there was a peaceful way to deal with things.”

We, in Rochester, worked with Lucius for many years sending humanitarian aid to Cuba on the Friendshipships that he organized. Whether traveling with him to Cuba or organizing in Rochester, we found him always available and willing to help and share concerns. I will always remember him at the border at the head of a great congregation of vehicles quietly telling U.S. officials that we intend to take this aid to “our brothers and sisters” in Cuba.

He was our friend and our inspiration.

— by Vic Vinkey, Treasurer of ROCLA and Chairperson of the Friendshipships for many years.

The Alternative Fair (continued from page 1)

the sponsor of year’s Maya art calendar, also benefits from its sale.

Here are some things to think about when you buy the hand made crafts:

The skills required to make many of these things have been handed down over centuries from mother to daughter and from father to son and within families and communities. Such accumulated knowledge forms a heritage that deserves to be valued, saved and taught to future generations. In this age of globalization, Fair Trade helps the Maya continue to practice the arts that so enrich their lives. That this kind of artisanal knowledge has disappeared in many other countries only makes Maya arts and crafts heritage all the more important.

In addition, at the ROCLA tables, steering committee member artist Marilyn Anderson will offer wood cuts about traditional crafts of Guatemala and member film maker Pacho Lane will have his videos about the culture and politics of Mexico. Both will donate a portion of any earnings to ROCLA.

The Metro Justice Alternative Fair will take place Friday Dec. 3 from 5 PM to 9:30 and Sat. Dec. 4. from 9:30 to 1PM at the First Unitarian Church on 220, Winton Rd. South.

Volunteers to staff our tables are needed. Please contact Marilyn Anderson (271-4374)