

ROCLA UPDATE ON THE AMERICAS

A PUBLICATION OF THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE ON LATIN AMERICA

ROCLA

MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 1973, the Rochester Committee on Latin America (ROCLA) seeks to build bridges between the Rochester, NY, community and the people of Latin America. Through its monthly presentations, speakers, films, and quarterly newsletters, ROCLA educates local residents about the culture, economics and politics of the countries of Central and South America, Mexico and the Caribbean and the ways globalization, US trade and drug-war policies impact the lives of their people. ROCLA also supports the work of frontline organizations involved in working for justice and democracy in the global south, including the Latin America Solidarity Committee (LASC), Nicanet, Committee in Solidarity with the people of El Salvador (CISPES), Network In Solidarity with the people of Guatemala (NISGUA), Rights Action and the Pastors for Peace Cuba Friendshipment. We also encourage our members and others to advocate for US policies that support human rights and reverse the often oppressive history of US involvement in Latin America. Annually, ROCLA presents its international and local White Dove Awards for outstanding leadership and service in the cause of human rights in Latin America.

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Understanding the Unaccompanied Child Migrant Crisis



Demonstrators in Washington, D.C. support welcoming migrant children.

By Dr. Grania Marcus

Amid the hateful cries of “deport them!” and the compassion of those concerned with their care in exigent circumstances, few seem to understand why up to 90,000 unaccompanied immigrant children are expected to seek refuge in the U.S. in fiscal year 2014. Almost no one, not President Obama, not most media and especially not politicians, is talking about the U.S.’s role in producing this crisis.

What would cause you to send your child on a 1,500-mile journey that risks their assault, robbery, rape, kidnapping or death? Experts tell us that 75% of the children come from three countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and their numbers have already grown more than fivefold since 2011.

Much of this desperate flow can be traced back to U.S. policy and actions in Cen-

tral America during the last decades. In the 1980s, our government trained and funded Salvadoran and Guatemalan military and police to destroy popular revolutions, beginning a long history of repression and human rights violations, especially of indigenous people. In

2009, the U.S. supported the military coup against democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya in Honduras (a coup that was condemned by the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization of American States). These countries have been left with brutal, corrupt armies and police forces, increasingly unequal societies and growing state and gang violence. “Security” aid to fight the “drug wars” has exacerbated violence in the countries from which the children are fleeing.

In a 2014 United Nations Report, 72% of Salvadoran migrant children said that evading gang extortion, witnessing murders and dealing with threats to themselves and their families, friends, and neighbors drove them from El Salvador. Gangs that the U.S. exported through deportation from California cities are part of their everyday experiences. El Salvador’s murder rate has increased by nearly 50 percent in the first months of this year.

(Crisis continues page 4)

URGENT ACTION

Protect Unaccompanied Minor Children

SIGN Petition: Amnesty International: <http://bit.ly/1mzGPZJ>
Honduras Solidarity Network: http://org2.salsalabs.com/o/7315/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=1813

CALL your Senators/Congressional Representatives:
<http://action.interfaithimmigration.org/protect-kids/>

VISIT Senators Schumer and Gillibrand’s offices, and the office of your Congressional Representative:

See the “Guide to Grassroots Congressional Pressure,” <http://www.cispes.org/activist-tools/cispes-guide-to-grassroots-congressional-pressure/> for suggestions for organizing a delegation.

WHY ARE NICARAGUA'S CHILDREN STAYING HOME?

By Chuck Kaufman, National Co-Coordinator, Nicaragua Network/Alliance for Global Justice

Former ROCLA White Dove Award winner Chuck Kaufman published this article on June 30, 2014, detailing why Nicaragua, in contrast to its neighbors in Central America, does not have huge numbers of unaccompanied minors fleeing from it. Nicaragua is still the second poorest country in Latin America, but it demonstrates that violence does not necessarily march in lockstep with poverty. Nicaragua's programs and social supports have instead produced a much more livable country since 2006. In fact, Nicaragua is one of the countries that is now receiving the traumatized children from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. The article has been edited for length and reprinted with permission of the author. [Ed. Note]

On May 19, 2014, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) presented its Regional Report on Human Development for 2013-2014 . . . [It] classified Nicaragua as "atypical" because of its low rates of homicide and robbery. Juan Pablo Gordillo, adviser on security at the Latin American Regional Services Center of the UNDP, said that, "The case of Nicaragua is an important achievement at the regional level," adding that because Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, it breaks the myth that poverty



Nicaraguan schools, such as this one, have a 96% retention rate.

causes violence. Nicaragua's homicide rate dropped to 8.7 per 100,000 inhabitants. Honduras, with 92 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, has the highest murder rate in the world. El Salvador has 69, Guatemala 39 . . .

Speaking in San Salvador at a regional conference on community policing, Nicaraguan National Police spokesman Commissioner Fernando Borge said that the proactive, preventative, community policing model of Nicaragua's police has helped make Nicaragua one of the safest countries in Latin America. He described "a model of shared responsibility, that of person-family-community" which shapes all the areas of police work. In 2013, out of each 100 cases reported to the police, they have been able to resolve 79. This compares to the almost complete impunity for crime, especially politically motivated crime, in Honduras,

Guatemala and El Salvador. Nicaragua, with its successful 1979 revolution, got rid of Somoza's brutal National Guard and formed a new army and a new police made up of upstanding citizens.

Respected Latin American polling firm M&R Consultants polls showed at the end of 2013 [that] 72.5% of Nicaraguans approved of government economic management and President Daniel Ortega's personal popularity stands at 74.7%, the most popular in Central America. Why? According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Nicaragua ranks second in Latin America and the Caribbean after Venezuela as the country that most reduced the gap between rich and poor in recent years.

The ECLAC found that Nicaragua's predicted 2014 GDP growth rate will put it among the five fastest growing

countries in Latin America. Why? Because Nicaragua invests in poverty reduction, education and health care. Nicaragua is the only country in Central America that managed to return to the pace of economic growth that it had before the international crisis of 2008-2009.

Nicaragua's successful poverty reduction programs have caused multilateral agencies and governments to become more interested in the effective implementation of programs that cater to the poor and allow more Nicaraguans to have free access to health and education. The Vice-President of the World Bank for Latin America, Hasan Tuluy, called projects in Nicaragua one of the best run portfolios of projects in Latin America.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has recognized that Nicaragua is among the countries that [has] achieved the goals set by the Zero Hunger Challenge ahead of time and has lowered [its] national poverty level. Official data from the Nicaraguan Institute of Development confirm this: in previous years, the level of "poverty was more than 40%, and that of extreme poverty 17.2%; today we are calculating extreme poverty at 7.6%." The director of the FAO Jose Graziano da Silva, congratulated the government for the effectiveness of programs implemented against poverty and hunger at the end of a 2013 visit to the country.

Nicaragua has also recorded indisputable achievements in (*Nicaragua continues page 3*)

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terms of disease prevention and health promotion, with a program of immunization that is an example for Latin America, with coverage as high as one hundred percent in children under one year old, and more than 95 percent in general. It has an effective campaign to prevent 16 serious diseases that can affect the population, such as diarrhea and pneumonia. The maternal mortality rate of 93 per 100,000 live births in 2006 was lowered to 50 per 100,000 live births in 2013.

Educational programs have resulted in a school retention rate of approximately 96 percent of the students enrolled. In addition, the government achieved 100 percent coverage of students receiving school meals, thus benefiting students of public preschools, community schools, and subsidized Catholic schools throughout the country.

Nicaragua is the country with the most gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean and tenth worldwide, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF). This means that Nicaragua is one of the countries where women have greater access to health and education, while they have more political participation and economic inclusion, said the study.

According to the Executive, investments from 2013 to 2016 will raise the national rate of electrification from 76 percent of households to a little over 87 percent, as part of efforts toward economic development with social inclusion. In 2006 electricity supply barely reached 54 percent and there were rolling blackouts averaging 14 hours a day. ■

This article is part of ROCLA's ongoing series focusing on the organizations that ROCLA supports.

THE LATIN AMERICA SOLIDARITY COALITION (LASC)

By Peter Mott

For more than two decades, the Latin America Solidarity Coalition's mission has been to unite the solidarity movements in educating the public about Latin American issues and changing U.S. foreign policy.

Back in 1992, the seeds of a new national movement germinated here in Rochester. We in ROCLA knew of many groups around the U.S. who were working separately with the people of various Latin American countries suffering from problematic U.S. foreign policy. In talking with them we learned that most of them had never met their colleagues – and wanted to.

We discovered that The Blue Mountain Center, an idyllic summer retreat for artists and writers in the Adirondacks, had just opened its doors to bring together individuals working on pressing social problems such as civil liberties, environmental health and safety, peace and economic justice. They liked our proposal and gave us space for a long weekend retreat. Thirty-four leaders came together at the Central America Solidarity Roundtable in the fall of 1992 for the first time. After three days of intensive discussions, we decided to form a national organizing group, the Latin America Solidarity Coalition, to coordinate the movement.

Since then, members of the



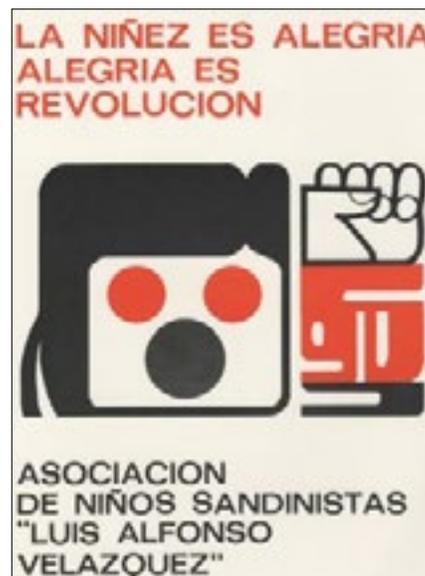
Members of the Honduras Solidarity Network hold a sign saying “Comrade, don’t be afraid, we are defending your rights.”

LASC have met nearly monthly by conference call. The LASC has called seven national conferences in Washington and Chicago. Part-time support staff are now in Tucson, Arizona, New York, and Washington, D.C.

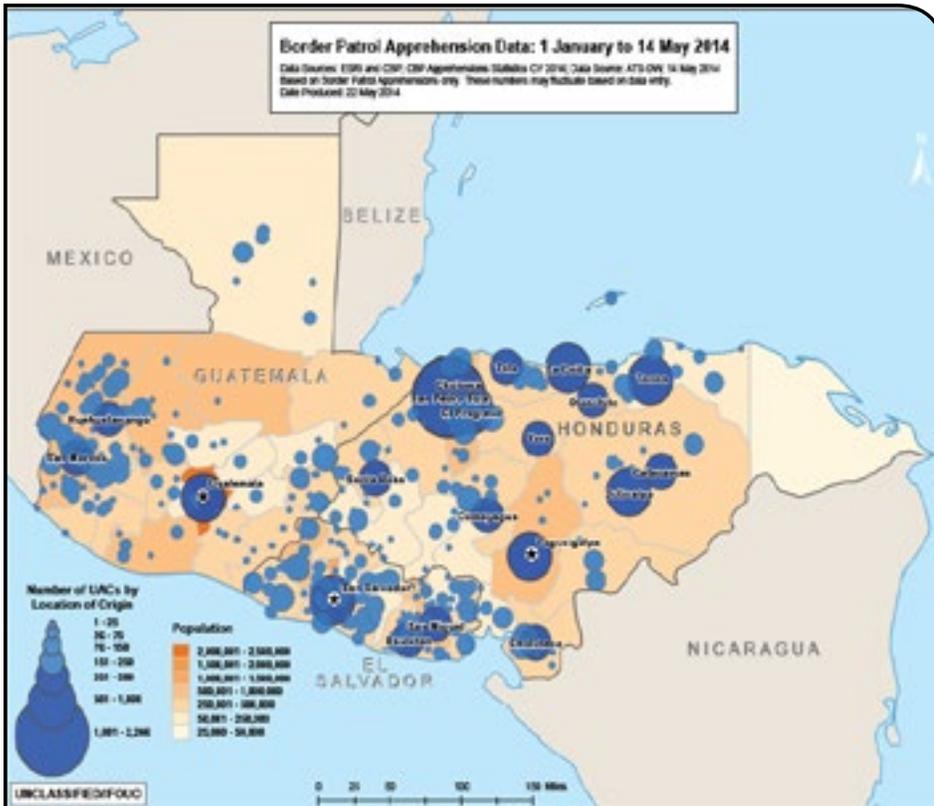
ROCLA has supported the LASC each year and in 2008 awarded its White Dove Award to Chuck Kaufman, one of its leaders. Currently the LASC is working on the SOA Vigil in November 2014, monitoring the situation in El Salvador since the election of an FMLN government, and planning for a December delegation to Peru for UN Climate talks. LASC is also exploring what might be done to alleviate the crisis of migrant children fleeing from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala and opposes the Obama administra-

tion’s efforts to strip protections for migrant refugee children in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act. ■

You can learn more about LASC’s work by following LASC on Twitter <https://twitter.com/LASolidarity>.



Nicaraguan Sandinista poster saying “Childhood is Happiness. Happiness is Revolution.”



Origins of unaccompanied children (UAC) apprehended by the US Border Patrol shown on a map of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. The areas of the greatest number of children are those with the greatest violence.

(Crisis continued from page 1)

Since the Washington-supported coup in 2009, violence has made Honduras the “murder capital of the world” and out migration has surged 500%. The State Department’s 2013 Human Rights Report found that a corrupt justice system has encouraged an impunity rate of 97% for “arbitrary killings by security forces” and “organized criminal elements.” The extreme human rights abuses have caused 108 members of the U.S. House of Representatives to write a letter to the State Department requesting a reevaluation of U.S. military aid to Honduras, and the State Department has acknowledged the unlawful and arbitrary killings by security forces and organized criminal elements.

A recent U.S. Customs and Border Protection map shows that Guatemala’s violence is also widespread. A 2013 United Nations report found that more than half of Guatemalan children cited poverty, deprivation, and abuse as their major reasons for leaving, but nearly one-third also attributed their flight to violence.

The 2003 Central American Free Trade

Agreement struck another blow, imposing so-called “structural adjustment” policies on these countries that cut social programs and essential services. In its wake, extreme poverty has grown, particularly in indigenous rural areas where competition from cheaper U.S. agricultural products has decimated rural livelihoods. Privatization schemes between El Salvador and the U.S., including the not-yet-signed Partnership for Growth (PFG), threaten to further exacerbate the existing poverty and displacement.

Tragically, the proposed “solution” to this swelling refugee crisis is the so-called HUMANE Act, which is anything but humane—it would remove the protections for child immigrants provided in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in order to expedite deporting them. And it is ludicrous to think that U.S.-sponsored messages to the people of these countries warning families not to come will stop those fleeing for their lives. We have an overriding moral obligation to care for these children humanely and assure their safety and long-term security in the homes of loving family members here in the U.S. ■

ROCLA Fall Programs: *Behind the Headlines*

Wednesday, September 3, 7pm

“What’s Causing Honduran Migration to the United States?” The recent surge in unauthorized child migration to the United States from Honduras has focused attention on violent crime in Honduran cities. In this presentation, Dr. Daniel Reichman, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Rochester and the author of *The Broken Village: Coffee, Migration, and Globalization in Honduras* (2011), will explore the long and short-term causes of rising levels of migration from Honduras, focusing on political and economic changes since the 2009 coup d’état.

Wednesday, October 1, 7pm

“Beyond the Headlines: Child Immigrants on the Southwest Border.” Dr. Curt Cadorette is Associate Professor in the Department of Religion and Classics at the University of Rochester where he is a popular teacher. He spent 27 years as a Maryknoll priest in rural Peru and is the author of several books, including *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutierrez* (1988) and *Liberation Theology: A Reader* (1992). He has just returned from working with Central American refugee children in ICE detention in New Mexico and will tell us about his experiences.

Wednesday, November 5, 7pm

“Border Patrol Nation.” Journalist Todd Miller, based in Tucson, Arizona, is the author of *Border Patrol Nation: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Homeland Security* (2014), which has been described by the *Los Angeles Times* as “the right book at the right time.” In it, Miller chronicles the rapid spread of immigration enforcement throughout the U.S., focusing on the militarization of U.S. borders and the interior, and the “rogue” tactics that have led to a record 400,000 deportations annually. This presentation is co-sponsored by the Greater Rochester Coalition for Immigration Justice. ■

All programs are held at Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh Street, Rochester, NY. The church is accessible for those with handicaps and is looped for the hearing impaired.



Rochester Cuba Caravan Bus on July 11, 2014, in Lima, N.Y., loaded with donations bound for Cuba.

"LOVE IS OUR LICENSE"

By Vic Vinkey

The 25th Pastors for Peace (PfP) Friendshipment Caravan crossed into Mexico on July 22, 2014, carrying 100 tons of supplies, including 2 school buses, 2 trucks, and a van, destined for Cuban hospitals, churches, schools and community centers. In an "act of loving, non-violent civil-disobedience," the Caravan crossed the border without a license from the U.S. Government. This year the Caravan was dedicated to the youth of Cuba, who are the children of the Revolution and will keep it alive for their children to inherit.

As it has for many years, ROCLA joined the Friendshipment by sending medicines, medical equipment, construction equipment and construction supplies on the Pastors for Peace bus to break the immoral and illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba.

The *caravanistas* who accompanied the humanitarian aid traveled through Cuba on an educational tour to many sites including the Kairos Center in Matanzas where they visited sustainable development projects; ELAM, the Latin American School of Medicine, where they learned the history of the school that has educated thousands of doctors from countries all over Asia, Africa and Latin America; the Presbyterian Church in Varadero, where pioneer liberation theologian Rev. Dr. Sergio Arce charged the *caravanistas* to continue their struggle for justice; and the Martin Luther King Center, where they visited projects and participated in a dialogue on redefining solidarity with action rooted in popular education.



IFCO Co-director Fr. Luis Barrios waters a tree planted in memory of the Rev. Lucius Walker, founder of Pastors for Peace, at the Casa de Amistad in Havana, Cuba.

On August 4th, members of the Friendshipment Caravan returned triumphantly home from Cuba, crossing the border into the U.S. "safely and without incident."

The ROCLA steering committee appreciates the leadership of Callie Rabe, who spearheaded our effort this year, packed and loaded many boxes of aid, and even painted the Friendshipment bus that came to Rochester to collect the aid. We are also grateful to the many ROCLA members and supporters who contributed funds, material goods and volunteered their help to make this year's caravan such a success! ■

For further information and photos from the 25th Cuba Friendshipment, see the IFCO/Pastors for Peace Facebook page at facebook.com/Pastors for Peace. To be placed on the Pastors for Peace listserv to receive more information about its work, go to <http://www.ifconews.org/node/408>.

ALTERNATIVE WEBSITES FOR NEWS FROM LATIN AMERICA

Many ROCLA members have spent time in Latin America and the Caribbean and have studied the issues there for years. They are aware of the dearth of in-depth information available through the mainstream media on the countries of the Western Hemisphere and the often-slanted views presented. We want to encourage our members to read beyond the news and discuss Latin American issues with their families, friends and legislators. The following is a list of websites in English that provide knowledgeable well-researched news and analysis. Please let us know if you have a favorite site that you would like us to know about.

America Latina en Movimiento

<http://alainet.org/>

Americas Program

<http://www.cipamericas.org/>

Center for Economic and Policy Research

<http://www.cepr.org/>

Frontera Norte Sur News

<http://fnsnews.nmsu.edu/>

IC Magazine

<http://intercontinentalcry.org/>

Mexican Labor News & Analysis

<http://www.ueinternational.org/MLNA/>

North American Congress on Latin America

<http://nacla.org/>

SOA Watch

<http://www.soaw.org/news/>

Upside Down World

<http://upside-downworld.org/>

VenezuelanAnalysis.com

<http://venezuelanalysis.com/>

Waging Nonviolence

<http://wagingnonviolence.org/>

Washington Office on Latin America

<http://www.wola.org>

Weekly News Update on the Americas

<http://weeklynewsupdate.blogspot.com>

World War 4 Report

<http://ww4report.com/>

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To sign up for the ROCLA e-mail list and receive announcements of our programs and other special information, please visit this link: <http://stopha.com/rocla>. You can enter your name and e-mail there to subscribe or unsubscribe. Stay informed about ROCLA programs, upcoming events and urgent actions! ■

HELP KEEP ROCLA'S WEBSITE CURRENT!

ROCLA has a lively website (see: <http://rocla.us/>) where webmaster Jim Bearden posts current information about Latin America on an ongoing basis, as well as announcements of programs and other news. If you have information, articles or action opportunities about Latin America that you believe may be of interest to ROCLA members, please email the link or content to Jim at: jeb.bearden@gmail.com. ■

REMINDER!

You can now opt to receive your ROCLA newsletter electronically (and in color!) by email. The members that have chosen this option receive their newsletter sooner than the print version, ROCLA saves the cost of postage and paper, and the environment benefits. If you would like to switch to email delivery, please let Marilyn Kaiser know: rkaiser3@rochester.rr.com. ■