

IFCLA



The St. Louis
Inter-Faith
Committee on
Latin America

Inter-Faith Witness

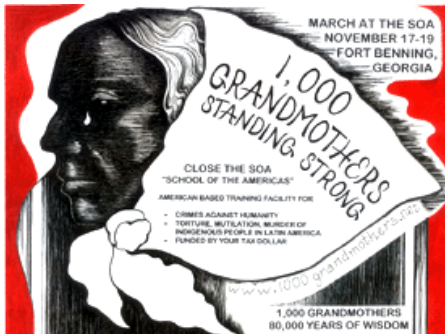
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A faith-based source of information about events that shape our lives

Fall, 2006, Vol 24, Issue #3

IFCLA ORGANIZES THREE BUSES TO SOA/WHINSEC PROTEST AND VIGIL Commissioning at the Annual Dinner on November 11

On Friday, November 17, 163 St. Louisans: religious community and social justice committee members, activists, and students from Fontbonne, Webster, and Truman State Universities, Wash U Medical School, Avila University in Kansas City, Incarnate Word Academy, Nerinx Hall, St. Joseph Academy, St. Louis U High, and Ursuline Academy will board three buses to drive overnight to Columbus, GA to stand at the gates of Ft. Benning for another year. Others are making other arrangements for travel and lodging. Organizers expect more than 20,000 people to gather from all parts of the country and beyond. A new campaign this year is the effort to have 1,000 Grandmothers stand at the gates to oppose the SOA.



Commissioning

There will be a commissioning service as part of the IFCLA annual dinner on Saturday, November 11 at 5:30pm. (See article on p. 7)

What is the SOA?

Ft. Benning is the home of the SOA/WHINSEC (School of the Americas now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation). The U.S. has trained more than 64,000 Latin American soldiers since 1946. But instead of creating a force which could serve their countries, graduates have turned out to be assassins, dictators, and death squad leaders.

Even though this truth was known long before, it came home to many Americans after the Jesuits and two women were brutally murdered on November 16, 1989 at the Jesuit University of Central America (UCA) in San Salvador.

Since the 1990s citizens from all walks of life have gathered at the gates of the military base to learn, to protest and to remember in a solemn funeral procession those killed at the hands of graduates of the SOA/WHINSEC: educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor; the same kind of people who travel to the vigil.

Eric LeCompte of SOAW

At the end of September, in preparation for the November event, Eric LeCompte of SOA Watch spoke at St. Cronan's Church *Issues and Inspirations*, local universities and led a nonviolence training for students.



The Legislative Campaign

On June 9, 2006, the House of Representatives voted on HR 1217, the amendment to the Foreign Ops Appropriations bill which would suspend the authority of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (the successor institution to the United States Army School of the Americas) in the Department of Defense, and for other purposes. While the amendment failed by only 15 votes, it was a major victory for the movement.

Work Needed

What we need to do now is build more support for the bill now that 20 supporter of the SOA lost their seats. Representatives William Lacy Clay MO-1 and Jerry Costello IL-12 are co-sponsors of the bill. Russ Carnahan voted for it but needs to be encouraged to co-sponsor, as does Todd Akin and other Illinois members. (to read the text of the bill and to see the names of the 134 co-sponsors go to www.thomas.loc.gov)

NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS: NOV. 5, 2006: FREE AND FAIR?

After Daniel Ortega's victory in Nicaragua, over 70 people participated in a forum on the elections at the Casa Ben Linder in Managua. Among the participants were members of international elections observation delegations organized by Witness for Peace, the Center for Global Education, the School for International Training, and the Carter Center, as well as long-term international residents of Nicaragua.

Four-fold purpose

- to share general experiences of elections observations,
- to share evidence of US influence and intervention in Nicaragua's electoral process,
- to discuss the extent to which the elections could be described as "free, fair, and transparent," and
- to gather a general summary of points to share with US groups.

Overall, the consensus was that the elections were generally well-run, without major anomalies. The elections were closely observed, with 1,227 accredited International observers and just over 13,000 national observers. Several participants commented that the Nicaraguan people exhibited a great attitude and enthusiasm as they participated in the voting process.

Some minor irregularities/problems were observed. However, all agreed that the irregularities observed were minor and not sufficient to significantly affect the elections results.

Prior to the elections, various scenarios were postulated in which large-scale electoral manipulation or fraud could occur. None of the participants reported observing evidence of systematic ballot or polling place annulment. No participants observed

instances of direct US intervention in the voting process on elections day. However, in the months leading up to the elections there were threats made by US government officials to cut off aid and trade with Nicaragua and to block the sending of remittances to Nicaraguans if the FSLN won.

Conclusions

- The elections were generally well-run, without major problems significant enough to call question to the official outcome (the FSLN victory). This is supported by watchdog groups Etica y Transparencia, IPADE, OAS, UE, Central American Observers and the Carter Center.
- There was a huge turnout, general enthusiasm and good attitude among Nicaraguans, making this election a good exercise in democracy.

- The Nicaraguan people have spoken; we and the US government have to respect their right to elect whomever they chose and their sovereignty.
- The US government must work cooperatively with the FSLN and Daniel Ortega as the democratically-elected leader of Nicaragua, and that we as US citizens/members of the international community need to communicate our opinions on this matter to our government.
- In discussing the Nicaraguan election with people in the US, it will be helpful to stick to the facts: that according to respected elections observer groups, the 2006 FSLN victory was free, fair, and transparent. Furthermore, US government officials openly intervened in the electoral process in several well-documented instances.

CANDIDATE WHO'S WHO

PLC (Constitutional Liberal Party): José Rizo and José Alvarado

Platform: reject neoliberalism and propose "social liberalism"

ALN-PC (Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance-Conservative Party): Eduardo Montealegre (banker) and Fabricio Cajina (successful agribusinessman)

Platform: voice of less corrupt and modern right wing; neoliberalism. Strongly favored by U.S.

MRS (Sandinista Renovation Movement): Edmundo Jarquín (worked for IDB and son-in-law of former President Violeta Chamorro) and Carlos Mejía Godoy (song writer)

Platform: promote renewed Sandinista agenda; use contacts with banks to get loans for Nica.

FSLN (Sandinistas): Daniel Ortega and Jaime Morales Carazo (banker with connections to the Contras and the indicted former President Arnoldo Alemán.

Platform: call for national reconciliation

(Alternative for Change): Edén Pastora (former Sandinista and Contra leader) and Mercedes Tenoria (nurse, active in Sandinista FETSALUD union)...very little support

News From Sister Communities

THE ROAD TO LIMAY



Reyna and Leaders at a planning meeting

Reyna Moreno, staff person in Nicaragua for the Rio Abajo Limay Sister City Project, has been working for more than a year to force the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (MTI) to repair the road from Estelí to Limay.

El Nuevo Diario reported

on June 16, that the people suspended transit on the Panamerican Highway for two days to gain the commitment of the functionaries of the agency. About 500 citizens took part in the action. This road is the only means of transporting persons and products.

GUARJILA AND ELLACURIA

This summer, the Guarjila Companion Community Project raised \$6,000.00 for health workers at the Clinic. This campaign honored the memory of Sr. Ann Manganaro, SL who started the clinic and would have celebrated her 60th birthday in July.

Currently, Dr. Dagoberto Menjivar is the director and nurse Marlene Cruz, who was trained by Ann, is the coordinator. The team includes Angélica Serrano who visited St. Louis with Marlene, health promoters, a midwife, a med tech, an elaborator of natural medicines, and an accountant. In March these women offer hospitality to the students from Nerinx Hall (Ann's

high school) who visit during their spring break.

A great focus of the work of the clinic is preventive medicine, education and prenatal care. They hold meetings in neighborhood sectors and at the clinic, teach classes in the schools, and present programs on community radio.

The Nerinx students continue to raise funds for scholarships for young women who want to study at the Institute. They can do a pre-college program or a technical track where they do internships in the village at the bakery, the carpentry shop and in other cottage industries.

In March, Marilyn Lorenz led an immersion trip for students from St. Louis University to Ellacuria a community up the road from Guarjila. The youth group was very strong and they inspired the students to be leaders at SLU.

The community is taking part in the resistance to projects of Plan Puebla Panama (roads and hydroelectric projects) and of strip mining in the surrounding mountains. The activism learned during the war in the 1980s continues in each of the small communities we have visited in Chalatenango. They are committed to the struggle for dignity and life.

“The Companion Community Project of IFCLA will sponsor a delegation to Guarjila in October, 2007 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the repopulation.”

REPRESSION AND ANTI-TERRORISM IN EL SALVADOR

On July 5, a student protest of a bus fare increase of five cents ended with the death of two police, the arrest of 31 protestors and a climate of crisis in the capital. The autonomy of the National University was ignored and buildings were

searched. Calls for peace came from church leaders.

This brings up the concern about the training of Latin American police at the ILEA (International Law Enforcement Academy). "The use of military instructors to train civilian

police and the lack of transparency about course offerings leave room for inadequate emphasis on human rights understanding and a continuation of the tragic legacy of the School of the Americas in the region." (SHARE report July 2006)

A social cleansing is taking place in San Salvador to encourage US investment now that CAFTA has passed.

Dr. Beatrice de Carrillo, Human Rights Ombuds-woman for El Salvador reported at a symposium in Washington, DC in October that there are 30-40 deaths each night due to a social clean up policy now in force.

EDWIN CANIL VICENTE

Edwin Canil Vicente of the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) in Guatemala will discuss efforts to hold former military officials accountable for genocide and crimes against humanity.

For more than five years, AJR has been working on legal cases against the former Guatemalan Military High Commands who for crimes against the indigenous communities in the early 1980s. The AJR is a co-plaintiff in a legal case in Spain which recently resulted in an international arrest

warrant against former President Rios Montt, Minister of Defense Guevara Rodríguez, Director of the National Police Chupina Barahona who were trained at the SOA. (see related story on p. 1)

Mr. Canil Vicente is a K'iché Maya and the sole survivor of the massacre in his community of Santa María Tzejá, Quiché. He managed to hide among the trees as the army killed his mother, grandmother, three sisters and a brother and cousins. He fled to Mexico to live with

relatives for twelve years.

He returned to Guatemala to finish high school and is now completing his law degree at the University of San Carlos. He co-founded a regional student's association that engages in political activism and community service.

Schedule of events listed on the back page.



In 1982, as a 6-year old boy, Edwin Canil Vicente witnessed the massacre of his entire Maya village by Guatemalan troops. Today, as a law student, he pursues efforts in the courts to bring those responsible to justice.

ARREST WARRANT FOR FORMER OFFICIALS

Guatemalan courts decided on Nov. 6 to give the green light for the extradition of retired military officials Mejia Victores, Angel Anibal Guevard, Benedicto Lucas Garcia, German Chupina Barahona,, Donaldo Alvarez and Pedro Garcia Arredondo.

These are six of those accused of carrying out genocide and, in this case, charged with the burning of the Spanish Embassy on January 30, 1980. The officials are charged with terrorism, homicide, and kidnapping.

Unfortunately, the court

decided not to issue an arrest warrant for Efraín Rios Montt. The judges stated that the Spanish investigation did not bring forward enough elements to charge the former President.

The Human Rights Community has reason to

celebrate this victory but must wait to see what will result. This case was decided on the principle of universal jurisdiction which recognizes crimes against humanity as prosecutable in the national courts of any country.

MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is a United States government-owned corporation responsible for the stewardship of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). MCC is designed to promote, support and ensure accountability for the innovative foreign aid strategies it administers.

The key principles of the MCC are to

*Reduce Poverty through Economic Growth: focus on agriculture, education, private sector development, capacity building...

*Reward Good Policy: assistance given to those who govern justly, invest in their citizens, encourage economic freedom...

*Operate as Partners: the countries will be responsible for identifying the greatest barriers to their own development, ensuring civil

society participation, and developing an MCA program

*Focus on Results: clear objectives, benchmarks to measure progress, procedures to ensure fiscal accountability and sustainability. www.mcc.gov

El Salvador has been chosen to receive MCC funds. Our friends in the country report that the principles are not followed.

EFFECTS OF FREE TRADE IN EL SALVADOR César Senci3n Vallalon

close with imports from the US totaling \$272 million, or 13% more than in 2005. The products registering the greatest increases are red meats, dairy products, white corn and rice. Across the board, CAFTA has not stimulated Salvadoran agricultural exports, with the exception of sugar.

Meanwhile, consumer prices have shown a tendency to rise—in spite of assurances pre-CAFTA that the opposite would occur.

The accumulated inflation in 2006 was 5.6% (4.3% last year).

Furthermore, CAFTA has had negative repercussions on fiscal

income, which according to the Central Reserve has decreased from \$17 to \$14 million between March and April, 2006.

Cesar Sencion Vallalon is an economist in El Salvador who testified in Washington DC in September.

What is Fair Trade?

1. International Labor Standards
2. End Export Subsidies for U. S. Agriculture
3. Ensure Food Security
4. Greater Democratic Involvement
5. Local Power to Protect the Environment
6. Greater Control Over Investment
7. Development of Local Linkages

(source: SHARE Foundation)



Strip-mining is one of the development projects proposed...

On March 1, 2006, CAFTA was implemented. It is too soon to evaluate the full impact but there are tendencies which are critical to note and monitor.

In the first five months of 2006, agricultural imports from the US grew 18%. If this rate continues through the year, 2006 will

“Democracy is built upon the basis of truth and of the widest and unrestricted respect of human rights”

IMMIGRATION ISSUES

IFCLA has joined groups who are working locally and nationally for comprehensive immigration reform.

One group, **Metropolitan Congregations United (MCU)** at their annual public meeting called for the following immigrant rights action:

"We call for immigration reform because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of a broken system.

MCU calls upon our Congressmen and U.S. Senators to enact legislation that includes the following:

† Humane border protection policies.
† A process for the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants to legalize their status.

This is "earned legalization," not amnesty.
† Expanded legal means for family reunification.

† Legal avenues for workers & families to enter U.S. with rights fully protected.

Right now in Valley Park, immigrants who are not documented are being denied a place to live. Within the first week of this new housing ordinance being implemented 20 families became homeless. We believe that every person deserves a place to live regardless of nation of birth or current citizenship.

MCU calls upon our local officials to pass municipal or county ordinances similar to one passed in Chicago that states "No agency shall request information about or otherwise investigate or assist in the investigation

of the citizenship or residency of any person unless such inquiry or investigation is required by State Statute, federal regulation, or court decision."

Valley Park

Last summer, the Valley Park City Council passed an anti-immigrant ordinance which could lead housing providers, business owners, city officials and law enforcement to profile individuals based on their national origin.

On September 25, an injunction against the enforcement of the ordinance was ordered by the St Louis County Circuit Court. Valley Park revised some language of the ordinance, but another suit was filed by the plaintiffs challenging the new ordinance.

On Friday, November 3, Judge Weber in the federal circuit court heard attorneys' arguments as to whether the Valley Park case should be heard in state court or federal court. He said he would render his decision shortly. Now the elections are over we can expect to hear his decision soon.



TALKIN POINTS ON LOCAL ANTI-IMMIGRANT INITIATIVES

- Americans want a real **solution** to the problem not campaign rhetoric.
- Anti-immigrant city ordinances divide our communities. An honest and constructive debate on real policy issues is necessary.
- Anti-immigrant city ordinances send a message to Washington that the federal government must act on comprehensive immigration reform (this must be more than "security fences" and "border surveillance.")
- Passing city ordinances that punish landlords who rent to undocumented immigrants and employers who hire unauthorized workers, make English the official language, and deny benefits to undocumented workers only pass the problem to other communities.
- These ordinances will have negative consequences: discrimination, harassment, and civil rights violations against people suspected of being undocumented (often citizens or permanent residents). They can also lead to decreased public safety as people are afraid to report crimes to police, decreased public health as people are denied care or fear to seek it, and dire consequences in an emergency when individuals do not receive critical information in their native language.
- Only the federal government has the power to reform the nation's immigration system in a comprehensive and fundamental way.

National Council of La Raza 2006

Ellen Sherby of CEPAD was Dinner Speaker on Nov. 11



Ellen with husband Elmer Zavala and sons Galen and Kamil

Ellen has been under appointment as a mission co-worker since January 1, 2000, serving with the Nicaraguan Council of Evangelical Churches (CEPAD).

Ellen has worked with CEPAD's Nehemiah Program for visiting groups, Witness for Peace, the Presbyterian Church Reconciliation and Exchange Program in Honduras, and studied development and base communities in Ecuador.

It's not always easy living in Nicaragua," says Ellen, "but that's why I like living and working here. It makes me look poverty in the face every day and ask myself hard questions about where I fit in the global scheme of things.

"Most Nicaraguan families operate on a survival basis, living each day without knowing if there will be enough beans or tortillas for their children. There are a lot of reasons for the stark economic reality in which so many Nicaraguans live, including an unsustainable foreign debt burden that saps government resources away from social programs. Hope and hopelessness wrestle one another. This is the reality of the world, not just Nicaragua."

¡PRESENTE!

Jon Cortina, SJ
December 12, 2005
Pastor of Guarjila Community
Engineering Professor, UCA

Sr. St. Thomas More O'Reilly
April 20, 2006
"Tomasita" joined IFCLA very early and served as the editor of the **Inter-Faith Witness** until she moved to the Nazareth Living Center. Her wisdom and humor gave us life!

Marian Jenks Wirth
May 21, 2006
Marian and her late husband Art were strong supporters of IFCLA: Events at Eliot Unitarian Chapel and Wash U and Marching for many causes until they retired to California.

REMEMBERING THE MARTYRS

SEPTEMBER
James Guadalupe Carney

NOVEMBER 16
Ignacio Ellacuría, SJ
Amando López, SJ
Ignacio Martín-Baró, SJ
Juan Ramón Moreno, SJ
Segundo Montes, SJ
Joaquín López y López
Elba Ramos
Celia Mariset Ramos

DECEMBER 2
Maura Clark, MM
Jean Donovan
Ita Ford, MM
Dorothy Kazel, OSU

*"Accompaniment means staying with the people in their isolation, experiencing their threats and attacks, and seeing God in their faces."
Ricardo Falla, SJ*



Member St. Louis
Justice and Peace

See www.jps-stl.org
for more information.

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We're on the Web!

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NISGUA SPEAKING TOUR 2007
EDWIN CANIL VICENTE

NOVEMBER 12: 4:30-6:30pm

Potluck Meal and Conversation

CTSA: Center for Theology and Social Analysis
1077 S. Newstead (one block north of Manchester)

NOVEMBER 13: 12:00 noon

Emerson Library, Webster University

Edgar Road (across from Repertory Theatre)

NOVEMBER 13: 6:30pm

Potluck Meal and Conversation

St. Joan of Arc Church Rectory 5800 Oleatha

fair trade shopping

**Plowsharing Crafts
Holiday Shopping**

December 5, 2006
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Refreshments (coffee,
juice) and Christmas
cookies

IFCLA receives up to
20 percent of the profit!

**Evangelical UCC
Craft Fair**

Sundays
December 10 & 17
9:30-12:30

Rio Abajo and Guarjila
Crafts and Pottery