

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

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MISSOURI TAKES ON IMMIGRATION



The Missouri House of Representatives has decided to make Immigration a major focus of the 94th General Assembly. IFCLA has joined MIRA (Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates) Coalition in order to work for just and fair legislation.

Some of the bills which have been voted on or which are in process include (expect more):

- HJRes 7 which establishes English for all official proceedings of the state;
- HB 269 which prohibits the admission of unlawfully present “aliens” to public institutions of high education;
- HB591 which prohibits a person from employing or subcontracting with an “illegal alien” on any publicly funded project;
- HB85 which creates a felony of employing an “illegal alien;”
- HB889 which prohibits “illegal aliens” from receiving public assistance (this impact prenatal care); and
- HB851 which designates members of the Missouri State Highway Patrol for training for enforcement of federal immigration laws.

At the same time, in the Missouri Senate, Senators Chris Koster and Tim Green have introduced **SB348**, the Missouri Omnibus Immigration Act.

The key points are:

- Every employer is mandated to verify an employee’s work authorization through the federal Basic Pilot Program;
- Rental licenses and occupancy permits will be denied or suspended for knowingly or recklessly renting to an undocumented person/family;
- Law enforcement officers must inquire into the immigration status of any individual detained for any violation;
- The state shall enter into cooperative agreements with the federal government to designate state law enforcement officers to help enforce federal immigration law.
- Cities, villages, and towns are authorized to enact ordinances prohibiting the employment of unauthorized aliens or unlawful workers and may deny business licenses to employers who employ unlawful workers.

Meanwhile, the city of Valley Park has pursued its efforts to “rid” the city of “illegal aliens,” mostly Hispanics. The ordinance passed in July 17, 2006 would fine landlords for renting to illegal immigrants. Businesses that hire illegal immigrants could be denied city contracts. English is the official language of the city.

A temporary restraining order has blocked the enforcement of the ordinance until a federal hearing can be scheduled. Repeated changes in the ordinance have been met by new restraining orders. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and others including the Office of Hispanic Ministry of the Catholic Archdiocese are part of a suit challenging the ordinance.

This ordinance is part of a trend which began in Hazelton, PA. Pickens and Beaufort Counties in SC, Suffolk County in NY and Cherokee County in GA have similar ordinances. In all, ten states have passed thirteen bills to sanction employers of undocumented workers. (see accompanying story on p. 4)

EDITORIAL: YOUR LEFT IS MY RIGHT BY KEVIN WENZEL, INTERN

From our view up north it is hard to get a clear grasp of what is actually happening in the political arena of Latin America. The governments are becoming as diverse as the people. From a leftist South to Ortega's Nicaragua, it seems that the pendulum of the median has begun a steady swing over to the left. While many self-declared leftist or socialist candidates have won presidency throughout Latin America, (Chavez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia, Correa in Ecuador, Ortega in Nicaragua...) it has yet to be seen if they will be successful implementing their new "socialism of the 21st century" as Chavez calls it, or whether the leftist shroud will be enough to appear sympathetic to the poor but carry on politics as usual.

To begin with, the term "leftist" is a loaded one that really has no clear definition when applied to multiple governments. For example, the election of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua was considered a "leftist" victory, yet he double-backed on his campaign stance on CAFTA and is now working toward its

implementation. In Peru, Alan Garcia Perez's actions of market-friendly policies while maintaining the same amount of spending on social programs seems to be a far cry from his claim, "the poor win or we all lose."

Secondly, a leftist president does not always coincide with a leftist congress committed to the same goals as what a president might promote. In Ecuador, "the battle lines between the new president and the Congress are already drawn" with regards to congressional reformation. And in Venezuela, Chavez's way of dealing with a congress stacked in his own favor was to push through a rule of decree bill so that he can completely bypass the congress in the implementation of new laws.

Even with these leftist governments, new and old, one cannot understate the influence of the multinational corporations and the US foreign policy on Latin America. Because the path to equality relies on healthy economies, these countries still must battle

through the free-market principles of the North on the road to justice, a task that is seemingly an oxymoron in nature. Roger Noriega, the former assistant secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, summed up US foreign policy by saying that these countries should work "to fight poverty by adopting free market principles and trade liberalization." Yet we have already seen some of the debilitating side effects of CAFTA on the poor.

In Guatemala, with textile exports falling because of insurmountable competition with China, the loss of revenue on tariffs because of the free market will be translated into new taxes onto a population with 56% living in poverty. If there are any doubts on how well a free-market road to economic equality might work, one only need to look at Mexico under NAFTA to understand why 8 million Mexican emigrants have come to the United States illegally since its inception in 1994.

With the stated goal of just economics and social equality by many Latin American presidents, there is room for hope. However we must not let ourselves be blinded by labels of "leftist" and

assume that translates in to fair policies. We also must not let ourselves be blinded by our own actions and take a responsible and clear stance through education and action.

For sources and further reading check out the se articles and more at The Americas Program of the International Relations Center.

"Latin America's Pink Tide?"
- Laura Carlsen

"No Clear Victory for Left in Nicaragua."
- Alejandro Bendaña

"Guatemala: Two Months of CAFTA"
- Umberto Mazzei

"Hugo Chavez's Plans"
- Niko Kyriakou

<http://americas.irc-online.org/>

A LETTER FROM MARIA GILMA ROSALES, MAYOR OF LIMAY, NICARAGUA

In name of the community of Rio Abajo, La Naranja, and the municipal government of San Juan de Limay, we wish to express our thankfulness from the bottom of our hearts to you all who have acted in the best expression of solidarity. You have helped to reestablish the drive of the poorest of people who have been crushed by years of economic, social, spiritual, and natural oppression to regain their lives and the drive to be part of society. I cannot find the words to express the dimension and magnitude that I feel to express our thankfulness that will pass to be a page in the history of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Limayan families.

We are proud of the completed communal organization of Rio Abajo which has served like a school that has opened its doors to expand the understanding and experiences to other social environments with the view of taking new routes that can fill the expectation of the poor that have never had the opportunity to better their social status.

We would also like to express our gratitude to each person and organization that has responded with your letters, calls, and invitations to form part of this enormous will of solidarity with your economic, human, and material resources that have contributed and made this challenge feasible. Thank you very much and may the Creator bless you all.

Your friend always,
Dra. Maria Gilma Rosales E.

**NEWS FROM
LA CLÍNICA
ANA
MANGANERO
GUARJILA,
EL
SALVADOR**

*“The Companion
Community Project
of IFCLA will
sponsor a
delegation to
Guarjia
October 9-14, 2007
to celebrate the 20th
anniversary of the
repopulation.”*

Dear Friends,

Greetings. We hope that 2007 brings happiness and success in all of your arduous work and in your solidarity with the poorest of people.

The help that you have offered us shows that we can work for this other world where love, solidarity, and equality are the main values, even in this world that is each time more contradictory with the disparity between the wealthy and opulent, and the poor and miserable.

In honor of Father Jon Cortina, well-known priest and friend to the community of Guarjila since its founding in 1988, the community celebrated its first anniversary on the 12th of December, with the inauguration of a monument dedicated to him, Sister Ana Manganero, Monsignor Romero, and related martyrs of the community. Also the community decided to convert his house into a museum where one can take a historical tour of his life and the community. This monument and the museum are a collective effort supported by the Jesuits and Probusqda.

Attached we are sending the annual report for 2006. (see p.6) It includes information about the national situation and the achievements of the clinic. (full text available in the IFCLA office)

The Communal Core Committee and the community send their most sincere appreciation for the help that you have offered all of these years and thanks to this we can take pride in having a fair health system that promotes the education and health of children, women, and the elderly.

*Sincerely,
Dr. Dagoberto Menjivar, Director
Profesor Armando Marin, President of Directiva
Marlene Cruz G., Coordinator*

IMMIGRATION IS A NATIONAL ISSUE: Comprehensive reform must come from the federal level

The 110th Congress has introduced the following new bills aimed at immigration reform:

- **SB9** To recognize the heritage of the United States as a nation of immigrants and to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide for more effective border and employment enforcement, to prevent illegal immigration and to reform and rationalize avenues for legal immigration, and for other purposes. This bill was introduced by Harry Reid (NV), Patrick Leahy (VT), Charles Schumer (NY), Maria Cantwell (WA), Debbie Stabenow (MI), and Barbara Boxer (CA).
- **SB330** To authorize secure borders and comprehensive immigration reform introduced by Johnny Isakson (GA).
- **HR572** To establish the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Commission. Mr. Edolphus Towns, (NY-10) introduced the bill which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

WE ARE IFCLA WHAT WE DO DEPENDS ON EACH ONE OF US!

- 1. STUDY THE IMMIGRATION ISSUE.**
- 2. WRITE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: POST-DISPATCH AND SUBURBAN PAPERS.**
- 3. SPONSOR AN INFORMATION PROGRAM AT YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP, SCHOOL, OR ORGANIZATION.**
- 4. CONTACT ELECTED OFFICIALS AT STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL.**
- 5. WELCOME IMMIGRANTS INTO YOUR LIVES.**

TALKING POINTS ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

REFORM POSITIONS

- A broken system of bad laws hurt good people: outdated immigration laws are colliding with labor market reality. Enforcement only has not and will not work.
- ❖ Restore a rule of law that reflects reality: 1 out of 20 jobs in the US are filled by immigrants, many from mixed status families.
 - ❖ Create a path to citizenship which is fair and equitable.
 - ❖ Make visas available for needed workers.
 - ❖ Give residency status to workers living in the US.
 - ❖ Recognize contributions made by workers in taxes and low wages.
 - ❖ Charge no fines or excessive fees.
 - ❖ Reunite families.
 - ❖ Assist communities to welcome newcomers.

BUSH ADMINISTRATION

- ✓ Increase border security: wall and agents
- ✓ Temporary worker program: stay 2-3 years
- ✓ Sanctions for businesses that hire undocumented workers
- ✓ Limited path to citizenship for those already in US

REPUBLICAN POSITION

- ✓ Increased border security
- ✓ Employer fines
- ✓ Local enforcement of immigration laws

DEMOCRATIC POSITION

- ✓ "Amnesty" with fees
- ✓ Guest worker program
- ✓ Limited family reunification provisions

ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

None of the plans deal with the economic issues which make undocumented immigration inevitable. The neoliberal policies of the US, the World Bank, IMF, WTO and Latin American elites have created desperate situations for families.

- **RE-ORIENT ECONOMIES FROM EXPORT TO INTERNAL CONSUMPTION**

As countries export to pay off debts from the 1970s, extreme poverty increases. About one-fifth of the Mexican population lives on less than \$1 per day!

- **CANCEL MEXICO'S FOREIGN DEBT**

Free trade agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA open Mexican and Central American markets to highly subsidized US agricultural products. Small and medium-sized farmers are thus forced to abandon agriculture and migrate.

- **RENEGOTIATE NAFTA & CAFTA**
- **END SUBSIDIES TO CARGILL AND ARCHER DANIELS MIDLAND**

SOA REFLECTIONS AND NEWS

Page 5

TINA BUSCH-NEMA HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO CARSWELL FMC IN FORT WORTH, TX. SHE WILL REPORT TO PRISON ON APRIL 17.

SHE IS INVITING US TO JOIN THE SOA FAST APRIL 24-27 IN SOLIDARITY WITH HER AND TO URGE CONGRESS TO CUT FUNDING AND CLOSE THE SOZ/WHINSEC.

WILL YOU ORGANIZE A GROUP TO FAST ?

**WWW.SOAW.ORG
NOW HAS A LINK TO SEND EMAILS/FAX TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVE! ASK THEM TO SUPPORT THE NEW MC GOVERN BILL TO CLOSE SOA.**

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

We may speak different languages but our prayers are the same.
We may do different work but our hands are the same.
We may be different people, different ages, different souls,
but our love is the same.
Our love-and our suffering is the world's.
There is so much pain in the world, so much pain and sorrow for its children,
for its sons and its daughters to bear.
There is so much that is unjust, so much that pushes down on us,
that lays heavy on so many weary backs.
And there are so many that are blind to it all, so many that would not see the wrongs,
who would ignore the need for change.
But there are those who would see, those who would stand against,
those who would stand together.
There is strength and love and comfort to be given.
Those who would give it are everywhere.
And they are on the move.
They are gathering, they are meeting, they are joining hands.
They are praying and singing and dancing.
They are rising up to meet all those dark and heavy things that would crush us, that
would crush our brothers and our sisters.
They are working to fight misunderstandings and to make people understand—
understand the pain and what to do about it.
They speak different languages, they do different work and have different souls--but
their love is the same.
They are loving and they are changing the world.
They are giving the weary some much needed rest.
They are rising against--we are rising against.
We are dancing, we are singing, we are praying and we are joining hands.
We are changing the world.
We are here. And we are on fire.
And we are going nowhere soon.

Krista Schilling, Human Rights Studies Student at Webster University

Our goal was to join with 20,000 people from across the United States and Latin America to expose and close the School of the Americas/WHINSEC and to resist the oppressive policies and systems that it represents. We act in solidarity with our sisters and brothers and all those around the world whose lives are impacted by these policies, as one part of an international struggle for human rights and global justice.

As we gathered for the Vigil and March together we made our vow of nonviolence. In essence “we commit to recognize and to work to dismantle all forms of oppression in our personal relationships, local neighborhoods, globally and with Earth itself.”

It was a transforming event. We declared that we chose life over death as we stood on sacred ground remembering the hundreds of thousands of innocent people who were brutally murdered in their countries. This destruction of life was at the hands of graduates of the School of the Americas who were trained right here on the soil of the United States of America at Ft. Benning, in Columbus, Georgia.

We were called to witness to justice, to struggle for justice, and to call out the results of this injustice, namely, poverty hunger, disease and violence.

SR. JEANNE MEURER, FSM

REPORT FROM THE CLINIC: REALITY IN EL SALVADOR

Even though the government is reporting an economic growth of 4.2%, (doubtful statistics even for large business, who do not trust the data), the truth is that it does not matter because this supposed economic growth is not reflected in the living conditions of the majority.

Moreover, it is a growth sustained by the instillation of services, factories, and remittances and not being supported by the base of national production. More than anything Salvador is an importing country, even to the vegetables and basic grains that are the base of a sustainable diet.

The so-called "social" programs that the government promotes are not given sufficient economic resources for them to function.

The government has a social program called Solidarity Network that includes giving 15 or 20 dollars monthly to each family, as well as a new health program named FOSALUD.

Both programs are criticized by the social organizations and the political opposition for their lack of a true interest in bettering living conditions and serving mainly as propaganda for the government. Also the Solidarity Network is dependent on loans and not supported by the government's budget.

As with the health system, the government spends a small percent of the GDP in education, as well as housing and water systems. In 2005, the government appropriated 2.86% of the GDP in education, very low compared to other Central American countries that spent over 4%.

The worst social problems: unemployment, everyday violence, emigration, corruption, high cost of living, and the disinterest of the state make it difficult to see an improvement to human development soon.

It is important to note that although migration is a large problem, it also helps the country by means of the remittances. In 2005 alone the government reported \$2.8 billion in remittances, or 18% of the GDP.

And so this is our tiny country, so small and so full of social contrasts. Filled with commercial centers like those of Miami that push for consumption of things that we do not need while just a few meters away, shacks of cardboard full of hungry children and youth that end up on the streets because they cannot go to school and cannot find a job. Government officials that make between \$5,000-10,000 per month while the laborers make \$160-170 monthly and half of a population is able to work, yet are unemployed.

The communities in the northeast region of the departments of Cabañas, Chalatenango, and others have begun to see the imminent danger of mining in the zone. The mining companies are currently in the exploration phase. The government has said that it will not give any more permits but it has not canceled the permits already granted.

The communal organizations in the northeast have supported a clear and flat opposition to this phase of exploration, unlike in other parts of the country. The communities are clear that if they permit the companies to enter, they will leave behind an irreparable ecological disaster, "because of the low concentration of gold and silver in the regions (known to some as 'microscopic' or 'invisible' gold) the mining businesses must displace 20 tons of rock for every ounce of gold that is produced. This mandates the mass destruction of forests, modification of the landscape and the elimination to a large extent usable soil for agriculture." (Oxfam America, el Faro.net)

Besides the huge amounts of water that is needed, the use of cyanide during the process will contaminate subterranean water.

Up until now there has been a large controversy where the civil society and the political opposition are achieving in making the government reevaluate its position toward the mining. But there is still much to do to detain the intentions of the transnational companies supported by the state.

Other problems like the construction of a longitudinal highway in the north, are practically a fact now that the government has received 400 million dollars from the United States Millennium Fund.

This road has been presented as the doorway to development in the northern zone. While it might serve the population in allowing them to mobilize faster, the development that is so often talked about will be very far away. We know that this highway is part of the Plan Puebla Panama and that it will serve mainly to quickly mobilize international commerce.

"More than 14 years after the signing of the Peace Accords, we have a situation of generalized chaos...we face the deterioration of the environment...projects are planned without consulting the population and providing adequate information to the public."
Mirna Perla, CRISPAZ

JIM FITZ SPEAKS ABOUT COLOMBIA March 1-7, 2007

Jim Fitz has been periodically traveling to and from Colombia for five years working with the organization The Christian Peace Making Team whose motto is to reduce violence by “getting in the way.” From the stories that Jim shared, it appears that this method of accompaniment and discussion does have positive effects on the communities in which they are located.

Jim has worked in and around the town of Barranca Bermeja, which has had extreme violence from both sides of the war because it holds access to a primary oil pipeline. While guards turn a blind eye to the misuse of the oil,

guerrillas wait and plan for their next attack with the town and farms around it caught in the middle of the fighting. It is in this atmosphere that a multi-faith community has grown and is saying no to any more violence, even instating a no-gun policy.

Jim notes a general sense of necessity to end the violence in Colombia, from his talks colleagues with high connections to farmers, and the popular realization that violence and drugs are not going to lead to any progress. What will be the most difficult to overcome is the power of the drug trade and its accompanying violence. Both sides are implicated in this, with even an ex-guerrilla congressperson stating so. However the main pressure is the need to grow coca for survival. With current fumigation techniques, using Round-Up made

right here in St. Louis, all crops are destroyed even on fields as Jim has witnessed where no coca crops are grown, and a new technique of picking the coca leaves after spraying saves the coca plant but nothing else. With the large influx of US corn and free trade exports of other produce to the US, there is no sustainable market for farming crops other then coca. While these problems might take much longer to solve, there is hope for a stop to major violence as even president Uribe has begun negotiations with guerrilla leaders in Cuba even though his campaign platform was clear about his non-negotiation policy. By pushing for communal organizations, alternative crops, and governmental officials accepting responsibility and then taking action, a much more peaceful future of Colombia might not be as far off as it seems.

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

INTERESTING NOTE:

WILLIAM WODDS, US AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA (2003-2007) HAS BEEN SENT TO AFGHANISTAN. COLOMBIA IS A “GOOD MODEL” FOR THE AFGHAN DRUG WAR ACCORDING TO GEN. PETER PACE. (REUTERS)



Member St. Louis
Justice and Peace

See www.jps-stl.org
for more information
about how you can be
part of our major
funding organization

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.ifcla.net

**MAGGIE FISHER COMING TO ST. LOUIS
IN MAY!**

**POT LUCK DINNER
ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
4712 CLIFTON
4:00pm**

**Maggie was Program Coordinator of IFCLA 1987-1995.
She currently lives in Managua, Nicaragua.**

**Join us for an afternoon of
good food and community!**

¡PRESENTE!

Betty Wynn

December 26, 2006

Long-time friend of IFCLA,
Betty was always present at
IFCLA events and pot lucks.

We will miss her wit and her insight.

Rufina Amaya

March 6, 2007

Lone survivor of the 1981 massacre
at El Mazote, passed on after
suffering multiple strokes
and a heart attack.

Let us hold this valiant woman
human rights defender, her family
and her community
In our hearts.

**REMEMBERING
THE MARTYRS**

MARCH 12

Rutilio Grande, SJ
El Salvador

MARCH 25

Oscar Arnulfo Romero
El Salvador