



UPDATE on the AMERICAS

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

A Metro Justice Task Force

November/December 2006

Will you help ROCLA walk in solidarity with the people of Latin America?

A Membership Letter to Friends of the Rochester Committee on Latin America:

Thank you for your continuing loyal support of the work of ROCLA. In this time of continuous headlines on the situation in the Middle East we are counting on you, our members and friends, to remember the desperate situation of so many people in Latin America as well as the struggles locally of migrant workers trying to get state legislation for one day of rest. Please renew your ROCLA membership now so we can continue to educate and advocate on their behalf. The suggested donation for membership is \$20 per person and \$30 per family but any amount is greatly appreciated. Please fill out the enclosed form and envelope for your donation.

Here is a partial listing of where your membership money went this year.

Locally to:

- **Rural and Migrant Ministry in Brockport;**
- **CITA** (Centro Independiente de Trabajadores Agrícolas) in Brockport; and
- **VIVE**, the large and bustling refugee center in Buffalo that provides food, safe shelter, clothing, healthcare and legal services to refugees awaiting asylum hearings or entry to Canada.

Our meetings on the first Wednesday of every month at the Downtown Presbyterian Church provide a chance to learn, discuss, and take action. For example, you can join us on January 4th at 7 p.m. for a bon voyage report from Sarah Brownell who will be leaving for Haiti again at the end of the month. And remember that the Alternative Fair will take the place of the December meeting. Plan to do your holiday shopping at the Fair on December 1st and 2nd where you can purchase fair trade items that will make a difference in people's lives (see articles elsewhere). Please call Bob Kaiser, convener, at 293-3194 with your suggestions, questions or concerns.

We have partnered with – and given financial support to the following national organizations:

- **Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti**
- **Nicaragua Network**
- **CISPES** (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador)
- **NISGUA** (Network in Solidarity with Guatemala)
- **Mexico Solidarity Network** (which 13 of us from Rochester helped to found)
- **Venezuela Solidarity Network** (which 3 of us from Rochester helped to found)
- **INTERCONNECT** - national newsletter, published in Rochester, linking 1850 Latin American solidarity groups and individuals in all 50 states.

Internationally we have supported development projects with local connections

- **The Santa Maria Tzeja Middle School** in Guatemala, established in 1994 by Randall Shea (see accompanying article) and
- **The Guatemala Accompaniment Project** with agronomist Todd Bauer of Webster, who walks with Guatemalans on their journey toward self-sufficiency, including the use of bicycle powered water pumps for mini-irrigation systems.
- **The IFCO/Pastors for Peace Friendship to Cuba.**

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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

Have you joined MetroJustice?

When you renew your ROCLA membership you can save a stamp by joining Metro Justice at the same time. As most of you know, ROCLA is a Task Force of MetroJustice; and we are proud to be affiliated with the largest and most active grassroots organization working for social and economic justice in the Rochester area.

MetroJustice has almost 9000 dues-paying members and a staff of two – Organizer Jon Greenbaum (who edits a great newsletter) and Operations/Development Director, Tanya Smolinsky, plus a lot of hard-working volunteers. Other Task Forces include TV Dinner; Poor People United; Ciudad Hermana; Peace Action and Education; Corporate Welfare; health Care; Globalization; and Tikkun.

MetroJustice is active with clean elections, corporate welfare, health care planning, with labor organizing, and public broadcasting.

Call MetroJustice at 325-2560 and sign up today. Then you will get the informative monthly newsletter and want to take action to be part of the solution!

**SAVE THE DATE!
 RICE and BEANS DINNER**

Friday, March 16, 2007
 Downtown United Presbyterian Church, Rochester

ROCLA is proud to present the International White Dove Award to Dr. Magda Enriquez, FSLN (Sandinista) representative to the US. Dr. Enriquez has been active throughout the United States in acquainting U.S. citizens with the history and philosophy of the FSLN, and in opposing U.S. government interference in Nicaraguan affairs. Dr. Enriquez will bring greetings to ROCLA from Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

Ciudad Hermana's Michael Argaman will receive the Local White Dove Award for his tireless solidarity work for peace. Michael served for many years as convener of the CiudadHermana (El Sauce/Rochester) Task Force of Metro Justice. Michael has led many delegations to Nicaragua. He is presently Treasurer of Metro Justice.

ROCLA chose both of these honorees well before the results of the Nicaraguan election were known. Even if the Sandinistas had lost the election, the ROCLA Steering Committee was moved to recognize the efforts of these two outstanding solidarity activists. Now that we know that the Sandinistas have won the election, these awards will be even more meaningful.

**Sandinistas Triumph
 in Nicaraguan Elections**

Arnie Matlin

Despite massive illegal interference by the United States government, Daniel Ortega led the Sandinista party to victory in the Nicaraguan elections on November 5, 2006.



As this is written, the Sandinistas (FSLN) have captured 40% of the votes, while Eduardo Montealegre—the candidate favored by the U.S. administration—received 33%. Jose Rizo of the right-wing Liberal party was third with 20% of the total. The Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) candidate, Edmundo Jarquin, received only 7.5% of the vote. However, this number probably underestimates the support for the MRS, because the original MRS candidate, Herty Lewites, died of a heart attack during the campaign. Many people who would have voted for the MRS returned to the FSLN after Lewites' death.

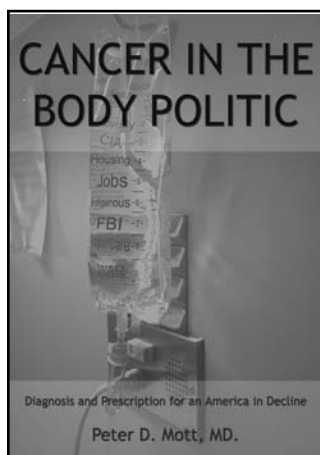
U.S. government interference in these elections reached new highs in virulence and new lows in morality. Just days before the election, in Managua, U.S. Embassy spokesperson Kristin Stewart threatened economic sanctions in the event of an Ortega victory.

She was joined by four Republican congressmen threatening Nicaraguan voters with a cut-off of remittances from the United States if they voted for the FSLN. Rep. Tom Tancredo, (R-CO) issued his threat in a letter to Nicaragua's Ambassador to the U.S., while Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, (R-CA) wrote to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff asking him "to prepare in accordance with U.S. law, contingency plans to block any further money remittances from being sent to Nicaragua in the event that the FSLN enters government." Rep. Ed Royce, (R-CA) and Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-MI) wrote a similar letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Many poor Nicaraguan families depend on money sent home by Nicaraguans living in the U.S. Threatening to stop these remittances is a particularly cruel form of intimidation.

Nonetheless, despite the threats, the Nicaraguan people gave the Sandinistas a clear-cut victory. As solidarity activists, it will be our job in the days, weeks, and months to come to monitor the situation closely. We will have to again speak out loudly and clearly if the U.S. takes action to undermine the new government of Nicaragua.

ROCLA Member's Book Published



"Peter Mott has brought together his life as a physician and his activism on behalf of human rights to give us what he calls a "diagnosis and prescription" for our nation, which badly needs both. This is a work of both fact and imagination, with a spiritual thread, a moral center, and it comes at a time in our history when we can use both common sense about the present and hope for the future."

—Howard Zinn

"I've met too many idealistic young people without the skills to organize or the know-how to actually effect social change (I fear most days that I am one of them!). In this book, Dr. Mott does something vital, which is to not just develop a well-researched prognosis of "patient USA's" socio-political disease, but provide a useful personal account of activist technique, as well as a comprehensive vision for a cure." —Ani DiFranco

Come to the Alternative Fair for an autographed copy (\$10). Proceeds go to the work of ROCLA.

Behind the Scenes: Why Guatemala Did Not Receive a UN Security Council Seat

Marilyn Anderson

Many ROCLA members know that neither Guatemala nor Venezuela received the Latin America seat on the UN Security Council. Many votes took place until a final compromise was reached on November 2, which gave the seat to Panama.

Guatemala would have been a very controversial choice as a because of its lamentable human rights record - but was nonetheless pushed as the preferred candidate by the US. President Chavez of Venezuela's controversial speech earlier at the UN provided leverage for Bush administration to oppose his bid vehemently. But the fact that so many countries did not agree with the US government is thought by some to indicate a lessening of Bush's influence. What many do not know, however, is that groups inside Guatemala and throughout the world lobbied hard for the seat to not be given to Guatemala. The Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) - which ROCLA helps support - also worked for Guatemala not to receive a place on the Security Council.

We can count this event as a considerable victory for the organizations and individuals working to not only bring peace and justice to Guatemala but also to let the world know that the promises of the 1996 Peace Accords have not yet been realized.

(NISGUA is the source for some of the above material.)

2006 elections in Latin America Continue a Leftward March: What Will the US do?

President Lula has won the run-off second vote in Brazil by 60% to 39% over a conservative, by strengthening his dedication to the poor. By the time this goes to press we will know whether the polls in Nicaragua, which show former Sandinista President Daniel Ortega leading - despite US interference - were correct. Hugo Chavez also seems a clear leader for Venezuela's December election. The results of Ecuador's election in October still are uncertain at the time of this writing.

New presidents in Argentina and Bolivia are implementing their programs. It will take longer to see if Haiti's newly re-elected president, Rene Preval, is allowed by international powers to carry out his programs for the poor of that country. Likewise, Chile's new president, Michelle Bachelet, and Peru's more conservative Alan Garcia, bear close watching to see how well they can avoid the worst features of neoliberalism (such as corporate globalization and "free" trade).

Stay tuned, and let's hope our own US elections help end this government's interference with the rest of the hemisphere.

WONDERFUL NEWS!

Terry Lindsay, co-convenor of ROCLA for 8 years, is healing and recovering very well after experiencing a cardiac arrest on October 14. He, Debra, and Alison, are thankful to all of us for our thoughts and prayers and grateful for being part of this community.

Randall Shea Says Thanks

Dear ROCLA members and friends
on the ROCLA Steering Committee,

My family and I send you many greetings and best wishes from the village of Santa María Tzejá in Guatemala. We hope that all of you are in good health and spirits and enjoying the first weeks of the fall. My family and I are well, and indeed we are all anticipating our upcoming trip to the United States. We hope that our paths will cross with many of you during those days when we are in Rochester in November and early December.

I write today to thank all of you for the \$400 donation you made this past June in support of our middle school operation and scholarship fund here in Guatemala. 2006 has been an especially exciting and fruitful year for all of us involved in education here in the village. We have a new computer center open and operating, complete with 25 computers and internet access. All of our middle school students, along with the 5th and 6th graders from the primary school are receiving computer training. Separately, twelve of our middle school and primary school teachers have recently enrolled and are now receiving courses in a 3-and-a-half year university level teacher training program. The training they are receiving will no doubt strengthen their skills as teachers and inject fresh vitality into our programs. In addition, students from our school recently competed with students from other middle schools in the county and did quite well, capturing first place both in the "Knowledge Olympics" and in the "Judge for a Day" competition. My upcoming October newsletter will provide more details regarding the latter two events.

In short, 2006 has been an exciting year, and we are indeed very grateful for the support that we continue to receive from all of you at ROCLA. The money that you provide continues to support our work in the areas I mention above and in many others. May God continue to bless you all of you.

Sincerely,

Randall Shea, Program Coordinator
Santa María Tzejá Education Project

(Ed. Notes: (1) Randall spoke about his project on Nov. 8 at SUNY Brockport on invitation from the American Democracy Project, in conjunction with the university President's Distinguished Speaker Series. (2) You can support Randall's Education Program by sending a check made out to the Gates Presbyterian Church and mailed to: Gates Presbyterian Church, Attn: Rev. Ralph English, 1049 Wegman Rd., Rochester, NY 14624. Please note on your check that your donation is to support the education project in Santa María Tzejá.)

ROCLA Member Reviews Enrique's Journey

"Books Sandwiches In" at Gleason Auditorium in the Central Library on October 31st featured ROCLA member, Wally Ruehle, who gave a brilliant review of Enrique's Journey by Sonia Nazario. He said the book, for him, was a "life-changing experience." And he made it come alive in a most compelling way. The audience of 40-50 people showed its appreciation with enthusiastic applause. The "Books Sandwiched In" flyer says: "This is a gripping, visceral story of a teenage Honduran boy who, by himself, attempts to join his mother in the US. It is an epic tale of a journey fraught with dangers, and it is true. The descriptions of the risks he must take are unforgettable." Wally, an attorney and Director of the Immigration Program of the Legal Aid Society who has had 25 years of immigration law practice, was eminently qualified to talk about this subject. He left the joy and the agony of Enrique's and his mother, Lourdes', reunion for us to read. The book is available at the library and for sale at the library gift shop.

Help send Sarah and Kevin on their way to Haiti!

Come to a Pancake Breakfast at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality: 402 South Ave.

Sunday, December 10; 9 AM – 1 PM
Suggested donation \$5.

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, David Eisenberg, Hernan Escalante, Marilyn and Bob Kaiser (convener), John Locke, Gail and Peter Mott, Vic Vinkey, Mike Wahl, Tom Ward.

Update on the Americas Publishing Team

Editors: Gail and Peter Mott; Designer: John Locke

JANUARY SPEAKER, SARAH BROWNELL, TO LEAVE AT END OF MONTH FOR BORGNE, HAITI

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, January 4 at 7 PM because you won't want to miss hearing Sarah Brownell, who will talk about her work in Haiti. Her slides show what is being done with Haiti Outreach (Pwoje Espwa) in Borgne on water treatment, solar power, and ecological sanitation projects. Sarah has a degree in Mechanical Engineering from RIT and a Masters in Environmental Engineering from Berkeley. She is the co-founder of SOIL (Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods – for fascinating information go to www.oursoil.org); and in 2003 she helped found the Sant Teknoloji Brase Lilde Brainstorming Technology Center, which has been operating effectively to introduce new methods of sanitation and water purification to the community. Sarah lives and works at St. Joseph's Catholic Worker House of Hospitality with her husband, Kevin Foss. In Borgne, Kevin worked on children's empowerment. With six digital cameras he taught a youth group to take pictures about what they like and don't like about their town; what makes them sad, happy, or angry; what they can do to change their community. He also wrote a song to teach other kids, raised money for cameras for a lending library for teachers and helped repair the bridge. Sarah will weave all this into her presentation.

No ROCLA meeting in December – Instead, Come to the Alternative Fair!

First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Road South
Fun! Food! Music! Crafts! Art! and other fair-traded alternative gifts.

Come early to the Fair at the First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Road South. And shop often at the ROCLA booth!
Friday, December 1, 6 – 10 PM and
Saturday, December 2, 9 AM – 3 PM.

Fun and camaraderie for the whole family. Your chance to give the gift of a better world and to support social justice when purchasing holiday gifts.

The ROCLA booth will feature Marilyn Anderson's Pro Arte Maya cards, Guatemalan textiles and other Latin America products; and Peter Mott's book signing for CANCER IN THE BODY POLITIC (proceeds to ROCLA).

*** Sales support ROCLA projects in Latin America and the Rochester area.

Your help at the ROCLA booth will ensure that this is a success. Please call Marilyn Anderson at 271-4374, or e-mail her at manderson@igc.org. to sign up for Friday evening or Saturday – or both!

FEATURES of the FAIR

- ENTERTAINMENT: Enjoy some of Rochester's best musicians
- GIFT WRAPPING SERVICE: "Green" gift wrapping
- HOMEMADE VEGGIE FOOD
- FREE CHILD CARE

\$3 suggested donation (ages 12 and up)
For more information: 325-2560