

UPDATE on the AMERICAS

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

A Taskforce of Metro Justice

March — April 2008



CHANGES IN LATIN AMERICA: How they affect the people and US policy

On April 2, Professor Curt Cadorette Returns to ROCLA .

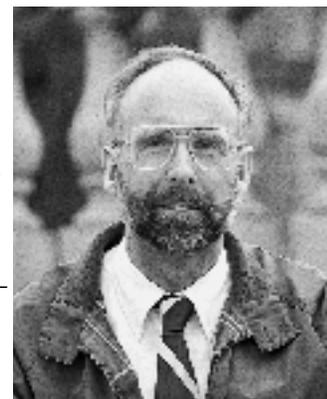
For twenty-seven years Curt Cadorette was a rural priest in Peru, living and preaching liberation theology. Now a professor of Classics and Religion at the University of Rochester, he once again will share his thoughts with ROCLA.

In earlier talks we were spellbound as Professor Cadorette described the socio-political-economic lives of Peruvians and how US economic policy/corporate globalization affects the people there – especially the poor.

Many changes have taken place in Latin America since then, the most publicized being the “leftist” turns of presidential elections in a growing number of nations: Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay and

Nicaragua. Also, there have been encouraging signs politically in Argentina and Chile. The situations in Brazil and Peru are unclear.

Professor Cadorette has the ability to see and explain clearly widespread changes throughout Latin America – how the poor are responding, how the US is responding, and where we should direct our efforts toward peace and justice.



Professor Curt Cadorette

The talk begins at 7 PM at the Downtown Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. Free parking after 5 PM at the City Hall lot across the street. DPC is wheelchair-accessible and looped for those with hearing loss. Everyone is invited to this free event.

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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
167 Flanders St.
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Destroying Democracy at Home and Abroad

- by Chuck Kaufman



[Ed. note: Kaufman is National Co-Coordinator of the Nicaragua Network and Alliance for Global Justice. Below are the first few paragraphs of his informative talk after receiving ROCLA's 2008 International White Dove Award at the Rice and Beans Dinner February 29. To read the entire text, go to www.interconn.org.]

The United States spends hundreds of millions of US taxpayer's dollars each year on so-called "democracy building" programs. Everyone is in favor of democracy, right? We'd like to see it spread to every country in the world. I know I would. So how do these programs work? Let me lay out a couple of imaginary scenarios.

Imagine a US electoral race in which a marginal candidate suddenly receives major funding from a foreign source. Let's say, Lyndon LaRouche is funded by North Korea.... Or Pat Buchanan is funded by Sweden.... Or Pat Paulson by Andorra. (Andorra is a 468 sq. mile constitutional democracy on the border between France and Spain.) Anyway, suppose that funding were equal to \$20 per US voter, which allowed a saturation of the media with disinformation, misinformation, lies, threats and empty promises designed to sway votes for Mr. LaRouche, Mr. Buchanan, or Mr. Paulson. Suppose at the same time that foreign power was threatening violence and economic damage if the wrong candidate won.

Absurd, right? Yet that is exactly what happened to Nicaragua in the 1990 election when the Sandinistas were defeated in supposedly free and fair elections. The US government combined 13 minor parties and even dictated that they would nominate Violeta Chamorro, wife of a martyred newspaper publisher who was killed by Somoza's National Guard. Then the US spent more per voter on the election than two years earlier George Bush Sr. and Michael Dukakis spent COMBINED on their US presidential race. In the US, it is illegal for foreign governments, groups, or individuals to contribute to a political campaign. But free and fair take on a whole new meaning if the US government wants to insure a particular outcome in another nation's election.

Let's go even further with our imaginary scenario. Suppose that this hypothetical foreign nation put together a coalition of US citizens and organizations that were hostile to the current president and political power structure and were calling for "regime change." Suppose it trained and funded their armed wing just across the border in Canada. Imagine that the armed wing launched a violent urban and rural terror campaign and that Andorra or Sweden, or North Korea used that as a pretext to invade the United States, kidnap the president, send him into exile, and install the violent opposition minority as the new government. Imagine further that armed supporters of the new government started to round up, arrest, and kill the deposed President's supporters.

Needless to say, US citizens of all stripes and political beliefs would be out in the streets defending their government, their nation, and their right to self-determination. The people who tried to perpetrate this atrocity would be arrested. The entire affair would be considered an act of aggression by the interfering foreign government.

And yet, this again is an accurate description of what the US government did to Haiti on February 29, 2004 when US marines forced democratically elected President Jean Paul Aristide onto a US military plane at gunpoint, flew him to the Central African Republic and asked that government to hold him incommunicado. Only when a small group of US citizens flew to the CAR and smuggled a cell phone to Aristide did the fictions the US government was telling about Aristide's supposed resignation begin to unravel. The Central African Republic was embarrassed and Aristide was allowed to leave, but to this day the US government has blocked his return to Haiti and Haiti continues to bleed.

I could go on and make up imaginary scenarios for the US role in the 2002 failed coup against President Chavez in Venezuela, its role in the last presidential election in El Salvador, its role in elections in Mongolia and the Ukraine – indeed all of those color coded so-called Revolutions in the former Soviet bloc. And I could make up scenarios for the unsuccessful efforts by the US government to sway the outcome of the 2006 presidential elections in Nicaragua and Venezuela.

But I think you get the point...

BEST FUN OF THE YEAR – RICE AND BEANS 2008!

How can it be better than last year? Or the year before that? The fact is, each Rice and Beans Dinner is unique and makes us feel, **SI, SE PUEDE!** Yes, we CAN! Another world IS possible! And this year our White Dove Award recipients proved that again.



Local White Dove Award: Only a week back from their winter with the people in Borgne, Haiti , Sarah

Brownell and Kevin Foos - she an environmental engineer and he a community activist – shared their experiences in community-building to a rapt audience of over 100. This included a four-minute video of “Looking Through Their Eyes,” a photo empowerment project with youths in a slum of Cap Hatien who answer the questions, “What makes you happy?” “What makes you sad?” What makes you angry?” with their own photographs and captions. For information about their work with SOIL (Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods) go to www.oursoil.org.

The International White Dove Award was presented to Chuck Kaufman, co-coordinator of the Nicaragua Network and the Alliance for Global Justice. A steadfast leader in the fight for freedom and justice in Latin America, he has worked for 21 years to expose and oppose misguided US policy toward Latin America. He presented us with a lively and enlightening talk about the so-called “pro-democracy” programs carried out by the US State Department, the National Endowment for Democracy, and USAID. All of these have actually undermined democracy in many Latin American countries, including interference in elections in Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Venezuela. For more information: afgj@afgj.org.

Peg Gefell’s (Savory Thyme) organic rice and beans, delicious salad and cornbread; scrumptious desserts provided by 20 generous friends of ROCLA; and the church’s fair-trade coffee from the Coffee Connection provided an auspicious start to the evening. After the welcome from Bob Kaiser, ROCLA convener, John Locke (also program-designer and White Dove graphic artist) MC’d a lively evening . Bob Good and Sue Schickler, with the help of Marilyn Anderson, managed the auction. And Bob Good’s brother Jaime Bueno (Jim Good), who lives in Ha-

waii, made the generous offer of his house on the island of Hawaii for a week to the highest bidder. The winning bid of \$400 will help the ongoing work of ROCLA. Muchas gracias, Jaime!

Special thanks to Marilyn and Bob Kaiser, Sandy Cain, Barbara Deming and Alice Gabriels for setting up; Barbara and Mel Witmer for registering everyone; Arnie Matlin and Peter and Gail Mott for introducing the speakers; Tom Ward and Linda Keevert for cleaning up; Don Fairman for audio-visuals; Downtown Presbyterian Church for the use of their space; and to everyone else who pitched in to help.

¡BASTA! (ENOUGH!)

HELP END THE US EMBARGO OF CUBA

44 years of the immoral, illegal blockade of Cuba is enough! On or about June 20 (exact date to be announced) the Pastors for Peace Friendshipment #18 will arrive in Rochester. Once again we are looking to you for help with:

- Planning
- Fund-raising
- Publicity
- Packing and labeling boxes of medicines and medical equipment and
- Loading the truck.

Maybe you’d even like to accompany the caravan part way or all the way to Cuba?

Call Vic Vinkey at 271-8723.

With drivers of 100 vehicles and 50 tons of humanitarian supplies crossing the US-Mexican border July 3-4 without a license, this will be once again an example of civil disobedience for a higher cause than the misguided and immoral US law. As supporter Kermit Speer once said, “I’d rather disobey the law of the United States than the law of God.”

THE STORY OF SANTA MARIA TZEJA: A TALE THAT CALLS FOR TELLING

[Ed. note: As readers know, ROCLA supports the work of Randall Shea, a Rochesterian who served in the US Army Medical Corps, graduated summa cum laude from SUNY Brockport, became a businessman, visited Nicaragua in 1988 with a Witness for Peace (WfP) delegation, then left the business world in 1989 to volunteer with WfP. This led him to Santa Maria Tzeja. Recently, two of his friends went through the last 15 years of his newsletters and wrote up a summary report of Randall's Guatemalan education project. Below is an excerpt.]

In 1970, a group of formerly landless Mayan subsistence farmers founded the village of Santa Maria Tzeja in the Ixcán jungle of northwest Guatemala. They were hard-working laborers who grew their own food, harvested cardamom for export, and raised cattle. It was not easy, but it was a far better life than the one they had known as refugees. In the 1980's, however, along with hundreds of other rural Guatemalan communities, Santa Maria Tzeja was destroyed when the military launched a "scorched earth" campaign to wipe out a small number of rebels and their indigenous supporters. The death toll amounted to more than 200,000, and almost a million persons were displaced.

In Santa Maria Tzeja seventeen villagers were killed; most of the rest escaped to Mexico. Even though they had lost all their material possessions, they decided in May of 1994 to start a new life back in their own country. Further, they invited Randall, who had been living with them as a teacher in their refugee camp since 1991, to accompany them. They were carrying with them the idea of a different kind of community, one centered on schools for children. In a country where only a small minority ever finished the six grades of primary school, this was a radical notion.

With Randall leading the way, they enlarged their already existing primary grades, and in February, 1995, opened a Middle School with forty seventh graders and six teachers in attendance. In April, the Guatemalan Government gave the school formal recognition.

When Maria Tzeja refugees returned home, some of their neighbors were suspicious of them. The armed forces that had originally driven them away accused them of being anti-government. However, as the Santa Maria Tzeja School has grown and attracted more young people from the surrounding area, the school's success has won approval even from initially hostile groups. Parents and students of widely varying opinions have necessarily had to come together to discuss common issues. The result has been not only increased administrative cooperation throughout the region, but true reconciliation.

For instance, all sides eventually recognized that, for young people whose life experience had begun in the turbulence of a civil war, the "sterilized" version of history provided in the usual text books would not be appropriate. Instead, Social Studies students read books such as *Massacres of the Jungle*. By the year 2000, students were able to participate in an exhumation process, where a court-appointed forensic anthropology team attempted to recover the remains of the seventeen villagers who had been killed.

In science classes, students carried out land use studies both in Santa Maria Tzeja and in neighboring towns. The courses now include Spanish, Mathematics, and English as a Second Language, but also studies involving health, family planning, and AIDS prevention, all forms of Art—music, dance, painting, embroidery, drama.

As early as 1995 the first school theatrical group, Teatro 2000, developed a successful play called *There is Nothing Hidden That Will Not Be Made Known*, which dramatized the story of the Guatemalan Army's scorched earth policy in rural villages. It was hoped that exposing the truth of that war would prevent a repetition of the horror, and help to heal the remaining psychological wounds. The play won first prize for the Ixcán region and subsequently toured the whole of Guatemala. It was also filmed by BBC in 1996. A new generation of middle school students launched a revival of the play in 2004.

In 2003, the European Union invited Randall to write a new play dealing with the many difficulties faced by rural women in Central America such as wide-spread domestic violence and teen-age pregnancy. Entitled *A New Fire Lights Our Way*, the play has had three successful tours throughout Guatemala and a video version has been produced with English sub-titles.

A high school is in process of formation and a working computer center has been built. In addition, nine village teachers are now enrolled in a three-and-a-half year university level teacher-training program with a focus on Bilingual Intercultural Spanish/Mayan Education.

Planning for the high school began in early 2006. It will prepare students in one or more of the following fields: health studies such as nursing, environmental studies, agronomy and teaching.

A new computer center has been built, with funding from Jeff Taylor, the founder of Monster.com. Microsoft donated 25 computers and the accompanying software. Taylor, Randall, and his wife, Juana, were invited to take part in a panel discussion of this project at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Entitled "Bridging the Technological Divide in Rural Guatemala: A Tale of Community Building, Mud, Chickens, and the Internet."

Nine village teachers are enrolled in a three-and-a-half-year university-level teacher training program with a focus on Bilingual Intercultural Spanish/ Mayan Education. Juana, who has also taught several courses in the Middle School, particularly one on Women's Issues, is one of the nine. Classes are held two weekends each month. The students have homework and research assignments. Juana and 5 other teachers organized a traditional Mayan dance with Mayan marimba music on Guatemalan Mother's Day, May 10th, as a way for promoting the retention of elements of the Mayan culture. About 40 villagers, including elders and children (with the Shea's daughters Kristina and Phoebe) took part in the ceremony, which Juana then had documented in a DVD for her professor.

Continued on next page

SANTA MARIA TZEJA *(continued)*

Randall's latest newsletter reports the achievement of one young product of Santa Maria's system: Emiliano Panjoj Perez, who graduated from the University of San Carlos in 2006 as an Agronomist. Emiliano, who now teaches 7th, 8th, and 9th grade natural science classes in the middle school, was just awarded a major prize for his graduation thesis at San Carlos: "Proposal for Natural Resource Management in Santa Maria Tzeja." To celebrate the award and demonstrate the "wise use" of Santa Maria's natural resources, he recently led his class of 40 seventh graders on a hike to the nearby rainforest of Cerro Cantil. Since for these well trained students, it was only a step from contemplating Cerro Cantil to considering the fate of our planet, this is what Emiliano and Mr. Shea led them to do. After viewing Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth," they learned to sing--in English--a song at the end of that documentary, which goes like this:

Have I been sleeping?
I've been so still, afraid of crumbling.
Have I been careless?
Dismissing all the distant rumblings,
Take me where I am supposed to be,
To comprehend the things I can't see.

This is their promise to the future, their promise to continue, expand, and improve the rich educational heritage they have been bequeathed.

To contribute to Randall's work please send a check to Gates Presbyterian Church. Note that is to support the education project in Santa Maria Tzeja. and Mail to Gates Presbyterian Church, 1049 Wegman Rd, Rochester, NY 14624.

NICARAGUA: WHAT HAVE THE SANDINISTAS ACCOMPLISHED?

— by *Arnold Matlin, M.D.* ahmatlingvcp@igc.org

Daniel Ortega was inaugurated as President of Nicaragua on January 10, 2007. What difference does it make to Nicaragua to have a progressive left-wing president instead of a reactionary right-wing president?

1. COUNCILS OF CITIZEN POWER

Councils of Citizen Power are local groups that bring participatory democracy to each neighborhood. These groups—whose members are elected by their neighbors and friends—are empowered to tell the representative government what the neighborhood needs, and report the success of the representative government in meeting these needs. The two right-wing parties, and the small MRS party, opposed the Councils bitterly, but, ultimately, the Sandinistas prevailed.

2. UNION FENOSA

Union Fenosa is the Spanish corporation that supplies electrical energy to Nicaragua. Electrical energy was privatized in 2000. Electrical service in Nicaragua, especially in 2006 and 2007, was terrible. Rationing was instituted, and there were constant power outages. The new Sandinista government threatened to sue Union Fenosa for breach of contract, and Union Fenosa threatened to sue the Nicaraguan government. Spanish solidarity activists protested against this Spanish corporation with the slogan, "Nicaragua in Darkness." The Sandinistas promised to negotiate with Union Fenosa for improved service by early 2008, and this improvement has, indeed, taken place. Electrical service is still not good in Nicaragua, but it's better than it was.

3. ENACAL

ENACAL is the Nicaraguan water company. Before the Sandinistas took office, the Bolaños administration tried to destroy the corporation by hiring large numbers of highly paid, non-productive administrators. Then the government arranged for a loan from the Interamerican Development Bank to pay for "consultants" from Chile. It was obvious that this "consultation" had privatization as its goal. The privatization of ENACAL was opposed by the Consumer Defense Network, headed

by Ruth Herrera. In a bold and decisive move, President Ortega appointed Ruth Herrera as president of ENACAL. Ms. Herrera has reduced the number of administrators, cancelled the contract with the Chilean "consultants," and ENACAL has started to bring more water to more people.

4. OUTSIDE SOLIDARITY AID

Foreign aid from friendly nations, especially Venezuela, has enabled the Sandinista government to carry out many of its most important programs. Venezuela has supplied oil, electrical generating plants, and food to Nicaragua. In 2007, Venezuelan aid to Nicaragua was worth over 385 million dollars.

5. ZERO HUNGER PROGRAM

The Zero Hunger program is a bold and direct attempt to alleviate poverty and hunger in rural Nicaragua. The Sandinista plan is to distribute vouchers worth \$2,000 to 75,000 poor families in rural areas. With the vouchers, each family will be able to purchase a pregnant sow, a pregnant cow, seeds for food crops, and seedlings of fruit trees and reforestation trees. The short-term goal is to make each family capable of producing enough milk, meat, eggs, fruits, vegetables and cereals to cover its basic needs. The long-term goal is to establish local markets and to enable the families to sell their produce as a source of income.

6. IMF-WORLD BANK

President Ortega has continued to work with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The difference is that Nicaragua has insisted on favorable terms from the lenders, and has demanded that any new economic plan be in agreement with national priorities. Many people were surprised that the IMF and World Bank complied with these demands. "After 16 years of servile Nicaraguan governments bending over before the international financial institutions, it is fascinating to see what can be accomplished by a government that stands up to them." (Nicaragua Network Hotline)

7. HEALTH

When the Sandinista were in office between 1979 and 1990,

Continued next page

NICARAGUA *(continued)*

improved healthcare in Nicaragua was one of their greatest achievements. Like so many other Sandinista gains, the universal healthcare system withered away during 16 years of neoliberal rule. The new Sandinista government appears to be making a good-faith effort to restock empty health center pharmacies and to reenergize the healthcare system. Young doctors trained in Cuba have returned to Nicaragua to bolster the supply of physicians. Using creative diplomacy, the Sandinista government has offered to destroy 650 surface-to-air missiles, as demanded by the U.S. government, in return for U.S. medical supplies and equipment. Both governments have agreed to this plan in principal, and the details are being negotiated.

8. EDUCATION

A. Early childhood and preschool education During the first Sandinista era, the government built dozens of CDI's (Infant Development Centers) and SIR's (Rural Infant Services) to provide day care, education, and nutrition for infants and preschool children. I visited the largest of these, CDI Melania Morales, many times, and it was wonderful. As might be expected, after 1990, the government lost interest in providing daycare and preschool education for poor children, and these centers either closed or were privatized. The new Sandinista government has again made a commitment to CDI's, and has promised to open eight of them in 2008. Eight is a small number in relationship to the need, but it's a start.

B. Literacy program The Sandinista literacy program of 1980 increased literacy in Nicaragua from an appallingly low 50% to over 90%. It was the largest, most rapid, and most successful program of mass education in human history. After 1990, the right-wing government turned its back on popular education, and literacy gradually dwindled to 65%. The new Sandinista government has pledged to raise literacy to 95% in the next five years, using the Cuban mass education program, "Yo, sí puedo!" (Yes I can!)

C. Abolition of "school autonomy" In the 1990's, the right-wing government, bowing to the demands of the World Bank and IMF, began a process of so-called school autonomy, giving "ownership" of the schools to the parents of the children attending the school. What this meant in practice is that the government reduced school funding, and parents were expected to make up the difference by paying fees for their children's education. Predictably, many parents were forced to keep their children out of school, and the kids were condemned to a life of economic marginalization. In yet another bold stroke, the Sandinista government immediately abolished school autonomy. Even before President Ortega was inaugurated, he announced that school autonomy was ended, and universal free education had returned. The children flocked back to the schools. As would be expected, the children who entered schools found overcrowded classrooms and substandard conditions. In fact, some classes were held in tents, because there weren't enough classrooms available for all the new students. However, no matter how deficient the schools were, they were open, and they were free!

9. Summary

In summary, I hope I have demonstrated that, in Nicaragua,

there's a real and measurable difference between life under a right-wing, regressive government and a left-wing, progressive government. Since Daniel Ortega became President in 2007, the people of Nicaragua have had new resources, new opportunities, and new hope.

References

Nicaragua Network Hotline <<http://www.nicanet.org/?cat=8>> Free and highly informative.

Nicaragua Monitor article Looking Backward: How the World Bank's School Autonomy Project Failed in Nicaragua by Amanda McBride. (Monitor Nov-Dec 2007) <http://www.nicanet.org/?page_id=447> Provides details of "school autonomy" and it's consequences.

Good review article: Latin America's Shock Resistance by Naomi Klein. (The Nation Nov 26, 2007) <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20071126/klein>>

An excellent general summary of the progressive changes taking place throughout Latin America.

Drop the Debt - Call Congress Today

The Haiti Debt Cancellation Resolution (H.Res. 241) has momentum- there are now 66 co-sponsors, in the House of Representatives. This progress came from work by hundreds of people throughout the country who have called or written to tell their representatives that debt relief for Haiti is the right thing to do.

More help is on the way: A letter from dozens of religious, human rights, social justice and solidarity organizations throughout the U.S. will be delivered to Congress on May 18, Haiti's Flag Day- traditionally a time for Haitians to celebrate independence and unity. The rest of us can help Haitians celebrate future Flag Days by uniting this year to call our Representatives and insist on the debt cancellation that will give Haiti its financial independence.

Haiti's debt is odious and onerous. Odious because over half the debt is for loans given to "Baby Doc" Duvalier and other dictators, who diverted the proceeds to luxury goods and repressive thugs, leaving the poor peasants, market women and factory workers to pay the tab. The debt is onerous because the debt payments- \$56 million this year- literally kill. The payments divert money away from public health and sanitation programs. In a country where half the people struggle to survive on less than \$1 a day, that means children getting sick from drinking unhealthy water and dying for lack of simple antibiotics.

Haiti's creditors- the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development

Urge your Congressperson to support and promote H.R. 4114:

The American Anti-Torture Act

The American Anti-Torture Act of 2007 amends the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 to prohibit any person in the custody or control of the United States (under current law, the Department of Defense) from being subject to any treatment or technique of interrogation not authorized by and listed in the US Army Field Manual on Intelligence Interrogation. Makes such prohibition inapplicable with respect to any person in the custody or control of the United States (under current law, the Department of Defense) pursuant to a US criminal or immigration law.

Introduced by Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY-8) it currently has 72 co-sponsors. Please thank Rep. Louise Slaughter for signing on to this Bill. She is the only Representative from upstate NY to do so. Please call your Congressperson and urge him/her to sign on to H.R. 4114.

Information from CommonDreams.org:

"Since the War on Terror began in 2001, detainees in the "care" of American forces have been urinated on, doused with phosphoric acid, sodomized with batons, had their lungs forcibly filled with water, shipped abroad to even more brutal regimes, and so much worse. That's not my America. My America Doesn't Torture!"

"A vote on the American Anti-Torture Act would restore our ideals and reputation in the world – and would identify proponents of torture for all voters to see. Any member of Congress who refuses to actively oppose torture has no place in Washington – and no place on a ballot."

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

VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY SYMPOSIUM

Washington, DC

April 18-21

For more information and to register:
www.vensolidarity.org; vsn@afgj.org

Drop the Debt *(continued)*

Bank- recognize this injustice and have accepted Haiti into their debt relief programs. But their solution is as unjust as the problem: the debt relief programs impose harmful economic conditions- including immediate cuts in government healthcare and education programs, while the debt programs will not provide relief for at least two years. In the meantime, Haiti's government will have paid the creditors \$138 million in principle and interest, and tens of thousands of children will have died from drinking water. The lucky ones will have grown older without learning how to read.

H Res 241 is an immediate solution to this injustice. It would direct the U.S. representatives to Haiti's creditors to use our voice, vote and influence (the U.S. is the largest shareholder of all three) to obtain the immediate cancellation of Haiti's debts. As soon as the debts are cancelled, Haiti could immediately invest the payments- \$6.19 million in May 2007 alone- in saving lives and teaching kids. Contact Your Representative!

This immediate solution needs your immediate help. We asked Rep. Waters' office what would move the bill in Congress, and got back a simple answer: "Make Lots of Calls." So call your Representative by or on May 18, and ask her or him to co-sponsor the Haiti debt cancellation resolution in the House (H.Res. 241). Contacting Congress can be simple- just call the office, give your name and address, and saying "I am calling to urge Rep. ___ to co-sponsor H.Res 241, which supports debt cancellation for Haiti." NOTE: Please thank Louise Slaughter. She has signed on.

References: Haiti Reborn at haiti.quixote.org; and Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, 222.ijdh.org.