

UPDATE on the AMERICAS

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

A Taskforce of Metro Justice

Winter 2009



FOUNDER OF SOA WATCH TO BE HONORED AT ROCLA'S BEANS AND RICE DINNER MARCH 13, 2009

Make your reservations now!

— by Bob Kaiser

Every year as we plan the Rice and Beans Dinner we marvel at our good fortune in attracting outstanding and most deserving White Dove Award winners. And 2009 is no exception! Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of the SOA Watch, will receive the National White Dove Award; and John Honeck, a member of ROCLA and local activist for justice and peace, will receive the Local White Dove Award.

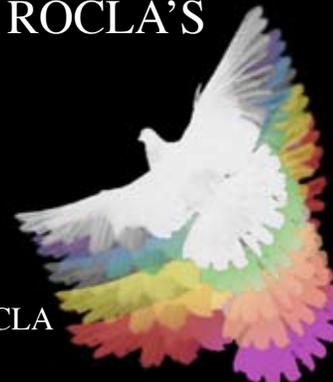


Father Roy Bourgeois

Both of them have gone to jail for acts of civil disobedience to SHUT DOWN THE US ARMY SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS.

ROCLA's Annual Beans and Rice Dinner is scheduled for Friday, March 13th at 5:30 PM at Gates Presbyterian Church. The White Dove award is presented annually to an individual or group who has stood fast for issues of peace and justice in Latin America. The ROCLA steering committee believes that Father Roy certainly is deserving of this honor. For 19 years

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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

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THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE
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FOUNDER OF SOA WATCH TO BE HONORED AT ROCLA'S BEANS AND RICE DINNER *(continued)*

he has led a growing number of people in protest against the School of the Americas (SOA), now renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation or WHINSEC, which has been used to train military people from Latin American countries who then return to their homeland and brutalize citizens. Father Roy not only has led the annual protest at Fort Benning, GA, but has also traveled extensively through Latin America to encourage countries to withdraw from the program. Responding positively so far, due to the SOA's negative image amongst Latin Americans, are Bolivia, Costa Rica, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela.

A local White Dove award also is presented annually. This year the steering committee unanimously selected John Honeck. John, a member of ROCLA, Pax Christi Rochester and Amnesty International Group #191, has been deeply committed to SOA Watch since 1996. Arrested at Ft. Benning in 1997 for crossing onto the post in the annual non-violent witness against the SOA, he followed with actions of civil disobedience in 1998 and 1999. In 2000 he and nine others were tried in Federal Court and received a three-month prison sentence which he spent in Allenwood Federal Prison Camp, PA. John lives in Hamlin with his wife Brenda, daughters Megan and Kate, and their son Liam.

After feasting on Peg Gefell's delicious and organic beans and rice, salad, and cornbread you will be treated to a variety of donated desserts and fair-traded coffee. For the past several years an added attraction has been the Auction, which will continue this year. See elsewhere for a list of irresistible auction items.

(Continued on last page)

ACTION ALERT

Legislative Update from
IFCO/Pastors for Peace 2/10/09

We are very glad to let you know about a new bill that has just been introduced in the House of Representatives: "HR874, to allow travel between the United States and Cuba."

HR874 would remove all restrictions on travel between the US and Cuba - not only for Cuban-Americans (which is what the new White House and Secretary of State have talked about so far), but for all "US citizens or legal residents." IFCO/Pastors for Peace strongly supports this initiative, as one of many steps that need to be taken to undo the unjust, immoral, and senseless US blockade.

The bill was introduced by Reps Bill Delahunt (D-MA) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and has seven more original co-sponsors. Our goal is to make that list of co-sponsors so long that the bill is guaranteed to win.

PLEASE CALL YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE and ask him/her to give support and co-sponsorship to HR874.

Call the Capitol switchboard: 202/225-3121, and ask for your Congressional representative by name. Ask to speak with the staff person who deals with foreign affairs and/or US/Cuba relations. Tell them you're a constituent and you are asking your representative to co-sponsor and support "HR874, the Delahunt/Flake bill to allow travel between the US and Cuba." (It's ok to leave a voicemail message if you don't get through).

Reps Bill Delahunt (D-MA, right) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ, below)



A parallel bill is expected to be introduced soon in the Senate; we will let you know when it's time to reach out to your senators for their support - and also about other new initiatives as we hear about them.

This is going to be a very interesting year in Congress. With the US in economic crisis, US/Cuba relations may not be a high priority on Capitol Hill. But we know you agree with us - and with the majority of the people of the US - that it's long past time to lift US government sanctions against Cuba. Certainly it's TIME FOR CHANGE - and we're the ones who will make it happen!

WANTED: A more positive US policy toward our neighbors to the South

— by Peter Mott

There appears to be a consensus among activists here that if we want President Obama to bring not only change but also justice then we must organize at the grassroots to put pressure on the Administration. This is nowhere more clear than in US policy toward Latin America. Both Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton lack full understanding of what our colleagues in the South face. Exactly what we must advocate is pretty clear. How best to accomplish this is not – and we write to ask you, our readers, for your suggestions and thoughts on how you might help ROCLA build such a campaign.

A nationwide grassroots campaign is building, and ROCLA is represented in the planning group). The LASC is working on a 5th national conference for the fall, most likely in Chicago. On February 15 the LASC and the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) hosted a teach-in in DC. Two more will be held: April 15 in Chicago and late April in San Francisco. Please join us!

The Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC) has written President Obama outlining its 11 demands:

1. Close the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, also known as the School of the Americas;
2. Close the International Law Enforcement Academy in San Salvador.
3. Stop funding Plan Colombia and cut off all military aid to that country.
4. Stop funding the Merida Initiative and the militarization of the US/Mexico border.

5. Close the National Endowment for Democracy and return USAID to its original foreign aid mission.
6. Return President Aristide to Haiti, advocate freedom for all political prisoners there and support the end of the UN occupation.
7. End belligerence toward Venezuela and other Latin American countries whose citizens have elected left-leaning governments over the past decade.
8. End the embargo against Cuba and normalize relations with our island neighbor.
9. Stop initiating “Free Trade” agreements that benefit only corporations while destroying local agriculture and forcing Latin Americans to leave their homeland to work in the US.
10. Publicly state support for the legitimately elected government of Bolivia, condemn the separatist violence, and take no actions to further inflame the crisis there.
11. Extradite the terrorist Luis Posada Carrilles to Venezuela, as required by extradition treaty, to stand trial for the fatal bombing of a Cubana Airlines flight that killed 73 people. Free the five Cuban anti-terrorist agents falsely convicted of espionage for infiltrating Cuban exile terrorist groups in Miami whose repeated terrorist attacks have killed over 3,000 Cubans and foreigners in Cuba.

Drafts of suggested letters to send our Congresspeople and brief “talking points” to accompany each of the above positions, are available by calling me at 381-5606 or e-mailing at interconnect_mott@frontiernet.net.

Documentary Film-maker Bill Jungels in Mexico

ROCLA’s meeting on February 4 featured selections from a new documentary created by Buffalo film-maker Bill Jungels, retired Professor of Communications at SUNY Fredonia. The main conclusions of Broken Limbs, Fallen Fruit, beautifully photographed among the poorest indigenous Mayans in Chiapas and powerfully annotated, were that:

1. Chiapas was already (before NAFTA in 1994) the poorest state in Mexico, with many of its people emigrating to the US.
2. The Wall Street-to-global market crisis and rising food prices have had an enormous impact on the Mexican people.
3. Worst of all for poor farmers has been NAFTA – with Iowa corn from Monsanto or Cargill squeezing out poor Chiapas corn farmers, and the World Bank – which has created a vast coffee business in Vietnam, ruining the market for poor Chiapas campesinos.

The Obama administration must be pressured to renegotiate NAFTA or – better – to eliminate it. No easy task because Congress has not been willing to act on this issue. HR 4329, the NAFTA Accountability Act, “to assess the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), to require further negotiation of certain provisions of the NAFTA, and to provide for the withdrawal from the NAFTA unless certain conditions are met” was brought before the 110th Congress and promptly died in committee in 2007.

ROCLA has a copy Bill Jungels’ video. It is on two discs: (1) How a poor Mayan family from the highlands of Chiapas...sees and negotiates immigration within the family. It has four “Extensions:” Mexican Coffee, the bitter aftertaste; Women’s Weaving Cooperatives; Maya Vinic (an organic, free-trade coffee coop in Acteal); and An Acteal Testimony. (2) A Portrait of Manuel: A migrant returns to his ejidal land with just enough to seed the land and ensure survival for his family. Extensions: Corn and Free trade; Remittances and the New Indigenous Elite; Nogales: Impoundment of dreams. If you would like to borrow the video (47 minutes total) please contact Bob Kaiser at 293-3194.

[Ed. note: The May meeting will feature photographer Joseph Sorrentino who will show slides and talk about his experiences with Los Cafetaleros (the coffee growers) in southern Mexico last November.]

**2/8/09 Beginning List of Auction items for
The Rice and Beans Dinner – Will be updated as items come in.**

(Donors' names in parentheses.)

- **Framed woodcut** of a Mayan artisan, printed with black ink on archival paper. \$35.00 minimum bid. (Marilyn Anderson)
- **A weekend in beautiful woodlands** at the Good-Schickler's wonderful cabin in Springwater. Come ready to relax on the handsome deck overlooking a gorgeous view of the valley. Light the "chimea" for evening fires. Canoe on nearby Canadice or Hemlock lakes – both "restricted." Sleeps at least six comfortably. The kitchen is fully stocked with appliances and equipment, a microwave, an excellent propane stove with oven, and a wood burning stove for heat with wood provided. It has a hand lift pump nearby for all the water needs and an indoor composting toilet system that is almost as good as a regular house bathroom, so you'll be helping to save the planet as well as enjoying a special time apart. Included is a bottle of maple syrup made on the property! Minimum bid: \$75. (Sue and Bob Good)
- Gift certificate for a **Free 3 Month membership at any YMCA of Greater Rochester.** (Tom Ward)
- Attractive, beautifully framed, **large Nicaraguan poster** that says - in Spanish – "The Revolution Continues." (Anonymous Donor)
- **Set of five cards in duotone reproductions of photographs:** Maya Children of Guatemala: Learning and Doing Traditional Arts. (Marilyn Anderson)
- **Nicaraguan ceramic vase.** (see photo), 19 inch tall and about 13 inches in diameter. The bottom is rounded and it comes with a pedestal that it rests on – and also a story: On the way back from Nicaragua Amy Pitt carried it on her lap, then had to sprint with it – filled with other heavy ceramic items - through the Miami airport to make the last plane out! (Amy Pitt)



- **DVD copy of Hugo Who** (John Locke)
- **Scanner** (Marilyn and Bob Kaiser)
- **Fax machine** (Gail and Peter Mott)

**DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL TO DONATE TO
THE ROCLA AUCTION?**

We welcome all contributions!

Please call Sandy Morales at 464-0971.

A New Path Toward Humane Immigration Policy

By the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) 2/09

[Ed. note: The full text is available at www.afsc.org. . These recommendations for a new approach to immigration in the US are based on the AFSC's direct work with immigrant and refugee communities across the country and include personal testimonies from immigrant communities throughout the report. President Obama needs to hear from us about the need for humane immigration policy. Go to www.whitehouse.gov and urge the Administration to read this report – and then act on it.]

THE SEVEN CORE PRINCIPLES

for a new path toward a humane immigration policy

• PRINCIPLE ONE

Create justice with humane economic policies. International economic policies, including trade agreements, need to be consistent with human rights, trade justice, and sustainable approaches to the environment and economic development.

• PRINCIPLE TWO

Protect the labor rights of ALL workers. All workers are entitled to humane policies that protect their labor and employment rights.

• PRINCIPLE THREE

Develop a clear path to permanent residence. Inclusive measures must be enacted that lead to permanent residence for undocumented immigrants, multi-status families, refugees, and asylees.

• PRINCIPLE FOUR

Respect the civil and human rights of immigrants. Immigrants, regardless of status, deserve the same civil and human rights as all U.S. residents.

• PRINCIPLE FIVE

Demilitarize the U.S.-Mexico border. The U.S.-Mexico border region must be demilitarized and the quality of life of border communities needs to be protected.

• PRINCIPLE SIX

Make family reunification a top priority. Recognize the distinctly important and valuable role of family ties by supporting the reunification of immigrant families in a way that equally respects both heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

• PRINCIPLE SEVEN

Ensure that immigrants and refugees have access to services. No programs should exclude migrants or refugees.

Jim Schmidt Honored by NY State Rural and Migrant Ministry

Congratulations to Jim Schmidt, the Rochester lawyer who has headed up Farm Worker Legal Services of New York State and who has spoken to ROCLA audiences about immigration and the lives of migrant farmworkers.

In November, at the Rural and Migrant Ministry's Annual Dinner at Riverside Church in New York City, Jim received the highest honor given for New York State. And he was quoted in a 1/27 New York Daily News editorial about Robert Kennedy's visit to a migrant farmer camp in 1967: "His guide was Jim Schmidt, then 28 and working for the Office of Economic Opportunity in President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. 'When the entourage came into one notorious camp in Wayne County the grower came out of his trailer with a shotgun in hand,' Schmidt recalled... 'An older black man called over and beckoned RFK into his trailer...when Kennedy came out 20 minutes later he kept saying how shocked he was that he could see rats under the hovel's floorboards...Later we visited a labor camp on the shores of Lake Ontario and someone took a photo which I can still see in my mind of RFK sitting there lakeside just talking with some of the children who also worked in the fields.' 'The following year Kennedy was assassinated and the legal standing of New York farmworkers has never changed.'"

Happy Announcement

Long-time activists Henrietta and Max Levine have celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary! You may write to them at their winter address:

16701 ne 13th st. Apt. 312. N. Miami Beach, FL 33162

UPDATE on the AMERICAS

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



Los Cafetaleros

The Coffee Growers

Photographs from Mexico's Coffee-Growing Regions

by

Joseph Sorrentino

AT

Coffee Connection

681 South Avenue

OPENING RECEPTION

FRIDAY, MARCH 6th, 6:00-8:00pm

There will be a fair trade coffee tasting during the opening reception.

Exhibit runs February 28-March 27

For more information, call Coffee Connection at

(585) 442-2180

or Email: joso1444@usa.net

"Woman Picking Coffee" © Joseph Sorrentino

Website: www.sorrentinophotography.com

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

FOUNDER OF SOA WATCH TO BE HONORED AT ROCLA'S BEANS AND RICE DINNER *(continued)*

The annual Beans and Rice dinner usually is held at the Downtown Presbyterian Church but their social hall was not available on dates acceptable to Father Roy and no other city facilities were located. Gates Presbyterian (1049 Wegman Rd.) is readily accessible via #490, exiting on Buffalo Rd east. There is ample parking and the building is wheelchair accessible. The steering committee will provide transportation for those who need a ride. Please call Bob Kaiser at 293-3194 or Vic Vinkey at 271-8723. Reservations (sliding scale of \$15-25) can be made at those two numbers and also by calling Gail or Peter Mott at 381-5606.

Directions to Gates Presbyterian Church, 1049 Wegman Road, Rochester, NY 14624. Office number is 247-5292.

FROM ROCHESTER: Take Rt. 490 - WEST towards Buffalo and get off at exit 7A onto Rt. 33- East (Buffalo Road). Get into left lane. Take Buffalo Road past light at Home Depot and Tinseltown and the next light is Wegman Road (Tops Plaza is on the right). Turn left onto Wegman Road and the second driveway on the left is the church, right next to Cornerstone Office Park.

Corporate Genocide: How the Goldcorp, Inc's Open Pit Mining Practices Threaten the Survival of Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala and Honduras

A talk by Grahame Russell, international speaker, journalist, lawyer, human rights advocate, and Co-founder of Rights Action (formerly Guatemala Partners).

Monday, February 23, 7:00 PM
Gates Presbyterian Church,
1049 Wegman Road (near Tinseltown)
Rochester, 14624

For more information please call Tom Ward at (585) 889-5932 or 341-3105