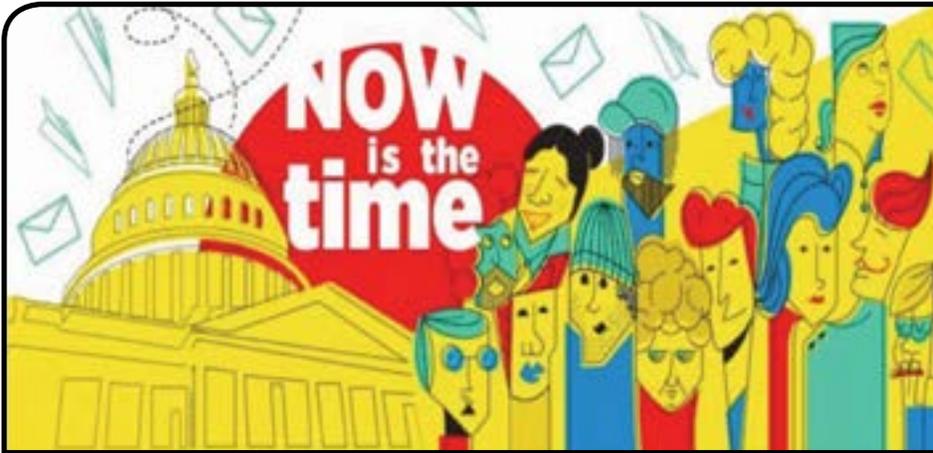


ROCLA UPDATE ON THE AMERICAS



JOIN ROCLA IN ENDING THE CUBA EMBARGO!

Save the Date for Cuba: June 21, 2016

By Vic Vinkey

This year's 27th Cuba Friendshipment will be different. Instead of large shipments of humanitarian aid involving trucks and buses, a small group of spokespeople from Pastors for Peace will travel along a route to Cuba making presentations to citizens and congressional representatives. The focus will be to support passage of House bill H.R. 403 and Senate bills S.491 and S.1543, which would end the nearly six-decade-long U.S. embargo and promote trade with Cuba.

ROCLA will welcome speakers from Pastors for Peace in Rochester on Tuesday, June 21st, 2016. As long-time partners of Pastors for Peace, we will hold several events on that day: meetings with local congressional representatives about the importance of repealing the U.S. embargo of Cuba and an evening potluck for ROCLA members with the speakers. Please join us to voice our solidarity with Cuba and spread the word. Your participation in this effort will help us manifest our continuing commitment to non-violently challenge the U.S.

government's policy toward Cuba by advocating for Cuba here in the U.S.

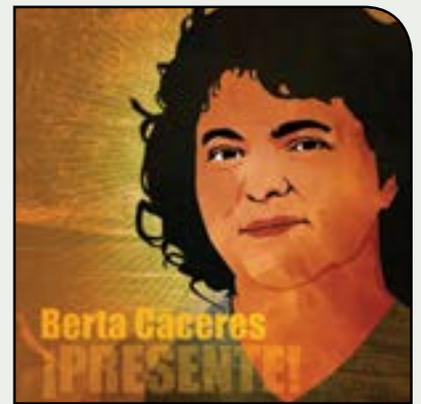
Watch your inbox for more details on these events! Contact Vic Vinkey for further information: vinkey@frontiernet.net.

For details about the House and Senate bills to end the U.S. embargo of Cuba, go to: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/403>, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/491> and <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1543>

Help ROCLA Buy Medicines for Cuba!

As ROCLA has done for many years, we will also collect donations to support the purchase of medicines requested by our Cuban partners. Please make your checks payable to ROCLA/MJEF and note "Cuba Friendshipment" on the memo line. Checks should be sent to: Kathy Goforth, 45 Lynbrook Dr., Rochester, NY 14609.

URGENT ACTION



Honduras lost one of its most courageous indigenous leaders, Berta Cáceres, on March 2, 2016. She was the General Coordinator of the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), and in 2015, she won the Goldman Environmental Prize for her activism and leadership.

Petition: Probe Assassination of Berta Cáceres in Honduras

To be delivered to the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

Congress should press the Honduran government for an independent investigation, prosecution, and punishment of those responsible for the assassination of Berta Cáceres in Honduras. Congress should condition future U.S. assistance to the government of Honduras on the results of an independent investigation.

To sign: <http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/congress-probe-assassination>.

See pages 3-5 of this newsletter for more details about the assassination of Berta Cáceres.



2016 Rice & Beans Gala Celebration!

This year's Annual Rice & Beans Gala, held on March 11, 2016, welcomed old friends and new participants from the local Latino community, a total of 119 guests! The celebration helped ROCLA raise more than \$5,500 that will go to organizations working for justice, democracy and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean. ROCLA's 2016 International White Dove Award recipient, Cecilia Moran Santos, highlighted how important ROCLA's work is during her moving acceptance speech describing her long journey from torture and imprisonment in El Salvador to her life with her son today working with immigrants. Here are photos of some highlights from the dinner.



Cecilia Moran Santos accepts the 2016 International White Dove Award on behalf of herself and human rights defenders The Center for Justice and Accountability.



Steering Committee member Paola Macas Betchart introduces members of Latinos de Corazón Dance.



Julio Saenz, Director of Poder 97.1 FM, describes the work of this new Rochester bilingual radio station, a project of the Ibero-American Action League.



Grania Marcus and Lucienne Nicholson distribute flyers at the dinner to protest the assassination of Berta Cáceres of Honduras.



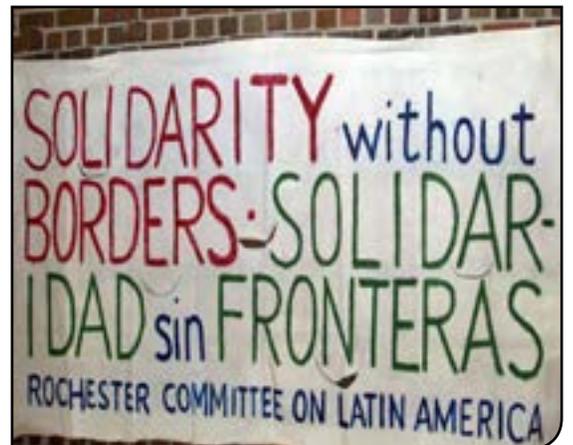
Marilyn Anderson helps Larry Filipski, Chief Financial Officer of Once Again Nut Butter, to put free samples of various nut butters on dinner tables.



Finale of Latinos de Corazón Dance performance.



Dinner guests look over the many Silent Auction offerings.



THE ASSASSINATION OF BERTA CÁCERES

Berta: Who She Is and What She Lived For

By Grahame Russell,
Rights Action

Berta Cáceres, a great Lenca woman from western Honduras, was assassinated early this morning. She was killed because of who she is, because of what she lived, stood and fought for, her whole life. And for her life, *sicarios* (paid assassins) broke into her home in La Esperanza, Intibuca, Honduras, and shot her dead in the dark of early morning, March 3, 2016. A mother of four children, a grandmother, a sister and daughter. And, to all who knew her, learned from her, got strength, courage and wisdom from her, followed her, a *compañera*.

Who Killed Her?

She was killed by all those people and economic and political institutions whose greed and interests she lived, stood and fought against. Berta lived against all injustices, all inequalities, all discriminations, all Mother Earth destroying activities.

She was killed ... by 500 years of European racist, violent, dispossessing imperialism, by 200 years of



A photo of Berta Cáceres graces her coffin. Photo: Alex Pérez

U.S. military interventions, exploitation, corruption and impunity, by generations of violent and exploitative, racist and sexist “governments” of Honduras, ... all propped up, all the time, by the “international community”: the United States, Canada, global corporations, the IMF, World Bank, IDB, ...

Berta was killed ... by eons of patriarchy, by centuries of racism against the Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples of Honduras and the Americas, by the greed-conceived and violence-imposed “free trade” agreements of the Americas, by the inherent,

endless avarice of global corporations and investors, supported all the time by the wealth and power of rich “democratic” nations (many being members of the exclusive and despicable G8 club) that exploit, repress and denigrate the “third world,” that make, prop up and mock “banana republics,” by the IMF, World Bank, IDB, etc. - institutions created and dominated by those same rich, powerful “democratic” nations.

Berta was killed ... by corporations and investors who conceive of the world

(Continued on page 4)



Background

Grahame Russell, ROCLA's 2001 International White Dove Award winner, wrote the moving tribute to Berta Cáceres reprinted here, immediately following her assassination at her home in Honduras on March 2, 2016. Berta was the founder and leader of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) and winner of the 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize. The documentary film “Resistencia” depicts some of her work. Berta's death has caused an international outcry against the current coup government of Honduras and the ongoing impunity there, where indigenous people, environmentalists and other social movement activists continue to be tortured, murdered and disappeared. Just two weeks after Berta's death, another COPINH leader, Nelson Garcia, was killed. COPINH is involved in the fight against the Agua Zarca Dam, which is being built to provide massive amounts of energy needed to carry out multiple extractive projects in Honduras. Since the 2009 coup, 30% of Honduran territory has been claimed by mining concessions, resulting in the evictions of indigenous peoples from their lands. Berta's family is protesting the lack of transparency of the investigation of her death and the persistent impunity in Honduras, where only 4% of murder cases result in conviction.

THE ASSASSINATION OF BERTA CÁCERES

– its forests and earth, its natural resources, its rivers, waters and air, its people and all life forms – as exploitable and discardable objects, and then steal, kill and destroy mightily to make their millions and billions, by the infamous banana monopolies (United Fruit Company, etc.) and railway barons of the 1800s and 1900s; by the producers of African palm (World Bank funded Dinant Corporation, etc.) and sugarcane for global consumers of “green energies” (ethanol and biodiesel fuels); by maquiladora sweatshop exploiters of cheap labour (Gildan Inc., etc.); by hydroelectric dam companies (DESA Agua Zarca, etc.) profiting from privatized rivers and water sources; by exclusive tourism enclaves (operated by the Canadian Randy “porn king” Jorgensen, etc.) violently evicting indigenous Garifuna peoples from their communal lands on Honduras’ north shore; by mining companies (Goldcorp Inc., etc.) ripping apart Mother Earth for gold profiteers, poisoning the waters of the Siria Valley and the blood of local residents.

Berta was killed ... by the U.S. created, funded and armed “war on drugs” that took undemocratic and unjust, corrupt and violent situations in Honduras (Guatemala, Mexico, etc.) and made them worse, all while drug consumption in the U.S. increases, while profits to the weapons producers increase, while tax-payers’ money to

the military establishments increases.

Most recently, Berta was killed ... by the U.S. and Canadian backed military coup in June 2009, that ousted a democratically elected government and brought back to power the same elites that for so long have dominated and abused Honduras; who –

once back in power - took all the above and made it worse again, who use repression as a tool of societal terrorism and control, hiring *sicarios* to target and kill so many hundreds of people since the coup, people like Berta.

The U.S. and Canada helped kill Berta. Seven years after the coup, Honduras has the highest per capita murder rate in the world, and amongst the highest rates of repression, femicide, journalist killings, corruption and impunity in the Americas. Ignoring all this, the U.S. and Canadian governments sign

“free trade” agreements and promote the expansion our mining, tourism, sweatshop, banana, etc. companies and investments.

Berta was killed by all these people, institutions and interests, because - as anyone will tell you who knew her, learned from her, got strength, courage and wisdom from her, followed her - these are the things she lived against, stood and struggled against, all her life.

What Did She Live, Stand and Struggle For?

For you and me and every-
(Continued on page 5)

Excerpts from the Statement of Berta Cáceres' Family on the One-Month Anniversary of Her Assassination

It has been almost one month since the cowardly assassination of our beloved Berta Cáceres, mother, grandmother, daughter, sister, aunt, friend and environmental and human rights leader . . . [and] we have yet to receive any kind of justice or respect, as we search for answers, from the Honduran government. Repeated formal and informal requests for information about the investigation that we should be provided with, according to Honduran law, have been denied without an explanation.

...given the fact that many threats and attacks against Berta and her organization COPINH involved members of state security forces and agents of private companies with links to high-level Honduran officials, it is highly unlikely that the intellectual authors of this assassination will ever be brought to justice.

This is why since Berta’s murder we have demanded

that the Honduran government agree to allow an independent international investigation with a mandate to conduct its own investigation . . .

We are dismayed that the US government – despite appeals from our family, more than 60 members of Congress and 11 U.S. senators, and from over 250 domestic and international NGOs – continues to express support in the Honduran investigative “process.” . . .

Lastly, we as a family have desperately sought to obtain the most basic information regarding the current Honduran investigation into Berta’s assassination, including a simple list of Berta’s personal belongings that authorities have seized, and a complete autopsy report as well as a raw copy of the existing video of the autopsy. One of the individuals responsible for denying us access to this is Honduras’ Director of Public Attorneys Jose Arturo

Duarte. Mr. Duarte has represented Desarrollos Energéticos Sociedad Anónima (DESA) in legal proceedings against COPINH, the very same company, that built the dam Berta and COPINH were fighting against and whose employees threatened Berta.

Our pursuit of justice will once again take us to Washington next Monday April 4th as [Berta’s family members], speak with lawmakers, international banking institutions, NGOs and the State Department . . .

It’s time for the U.S. to begin using that leverage to promote justice and stop the killing of social activists rather than continuing to hand the Honduran government a blank check to carry on with business as usual. *The complete statement is available at: <http://www.commondreams.org/newswire/2016/04/05/state-statement-family-berta-caceres-one-month-anniversary-her-assassination>*

one. For your rights and mine. For all human rights, collective and individual, of all people, in all countries. For all life forms, and for Mother Earth herself – the earth, fields and forests, the air and water, and all life forms on this most precious and solitary of planets. Berta lived, stood and struggled for another world is necessary and possible.

What To Do? I am desperately sorry for Berta’s children, her mother, her sisters and brothers, her family and friends in La Esperanza, and Honduras, and across the Americas. My heart today is again broken by this global human order we live in. As a part of me dies with Berta, a huge part of Berta lives on. What to do? Do what Berta would do, what she always did. Live, stand and struggle together. Hold hands. Give one another *abrazos* (hugs). Reach out to and support the so many victims of this global order. And always live, stand and struggle against all injustices and inequalities, all discriminations, all Mother

Earth destroying activities, for another world is necessary and possible. Thank you Berta. You are so utterly missed. You are so completely loved and respected.

For more resources about Berta, see: www.rightsaction.org; <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/35572-land-grabbing-is-killing-honduras-indigenous-peoples>; http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/world/americas/guatemalan-womens-claims-put-focus-on-canadian-firms-conduct-abroad.html?_r=0; <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2016/03/28/honduran-government-wants-incriminate-us>; <http://foodfirst.org/an-open-letter-to-secretary-of-state-john-kerry-regarding-the-murder-of-berta-Caceres/> <http://www.coha.org/730-scholars-decry-impunity-in-honduras-and-urge-the-u-s-state-department-to-demand-human-rights-accountability/> http://www.international-rivers.org/files/attached-files/03_2016_letter_honduras_berta_Caceres.pdf

COPINH Statement on the assassination of Berta Cáceres, March 3, 2016, La Esperanza Intibucá Honduras

- We reaffirm our struggle for the Gualcarque River!
- We reaffirm our commitment to life!
- We demand justice!
- We demand an end to impunity!
- We demand an independent investigation with international investigators and judges!
- We demand the immediate withdrawal of the paramilitary “Tigres” unit from Rio Blanco!
- We demand an end to paramilitary training and activity throughout the country, supported by foreign governments!
- We demand an end to the persecution of those who Defend the rights of indigenous people and the entire society!
- We demand the changes needed in our country!
- We demand respect for life!

NEWS IN BRIEF



Indigenous women of the Amazon protest. Photo: Mike Reich, Pachamama Alliance

500 INDIGENOUS WOMEN MARCH FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

On March 9, 2016, over 500 indigenous women left their communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon to join allies in Puyo, Ecuador, marching to denounce a contract the government recently signed with a Chinese oil corporation and to call for the protection of the forest and women defenders of Mother Earth. The Chinese consortium Andes Petroleum has bought the rights to drill in 500,000 acres of pristine rainforest, where multiple indigenous peoples, including two uncontacted groups, live. In 2012, a movement of international allies and organizers in Ecuador won the right to require free, prior, and informed consent before the government can authorize extractive projects on their lands. Protesters say the government pretends to be complying without actually listening to their pleas to keep oil in the ground. For more information: http://wecanininternational.org/news/1276/press-release_over-five-hundred-indigenous-women-of

the-amazon-and-allies-march-for-climate-justice-indigenous-rights-on-international-women%E2%80%99s-day/d/



IN MEMORY OF HÉCTOR NATALIO SOBEL

By David Tamarin
This past March 24th, [2016], marked the fortieth anniversary of the 1976 *golpe de estado* that brought to power the most brutal and murderous military regime in Argentina’s history. Over the course of its seven-year-seven-months’ iron-fisted rule (initially aided and abetted by
(Continued on page 6)

**NEWS
IN
BRIEF**

the United States) the regime “disappeared” and murdered some 30,000 Argentines in the name of implementing its so-called “Process of National Reorganization.”

Today, April 20th, is the 40th anniversary of the sequestration and “disappearance” of my Argentine friend, Héctor Natalio Sobel, who is commemorated as the first of the many progressive lawyers “disappeared” and eliminated during those torturous years. Héctor was a passionate defender of human and labor rights. An *abogado laborista* (labor lawyer), his professional life was dedicated to fighting for workers in workplace injury cases (primarily in Argentina’s notoriously dangerous construction industry), to bringing legal suits on behalf of individual workers who had been defrauded out of wages, as well as representing unions’ claims of violations of labor contracts by employers, etc. He also defended political prisoners during the military regime that held power between 1968 and 1973, [and] worked tirelessly with organizations dedicated to ameliorating the conditions of the tens-of-thousands of Buenos Aires shantytown dwellers . . .

Héctor, who had just turned thirty-eight at the time of his “disappearance,” left behind a wife and fellow lawyer, Carmen Sara González de Sobel, as well as two young daughters, aged ten and eleven. See the poignant articles written by Hector’s daughter Valeria at: <http://www.>

pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-83775-2007-04-20.html and <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/subnotas/82236-26445-2007-03-24.html>)

David Tamarin is a retired Professor of Latin American History at SUNY Geneseo.



PUERTO RICAN HOUSE AND SENATE AGREE: NO DEBT PAYMENT!

The Puerto Rican Senate and House of Representatives have recently passed an emergency declaration authorizing the governor to suspend payments on \$72 billion in public debt—setting up a dramatic showdown between Puerto Rico and hedge fund creditors amid the island’s historic debt crisis. The bill authorizes the Puerto Rican governor to “protect the health, security and public welfare ... [by] using government funds first and foremost for public services.” The dramatic move came one day after a group of hedge funds sued to freeze the assets of Puerto Rico’s Government Development Bank in order to stop the bank from spending money on the island that the hedge funds want to go toward upcoming debt payments.

For a detailed discussion of the Puerto Rican debt crisis, see: <http://www.thenation.com/article/orwell-in-puerto->

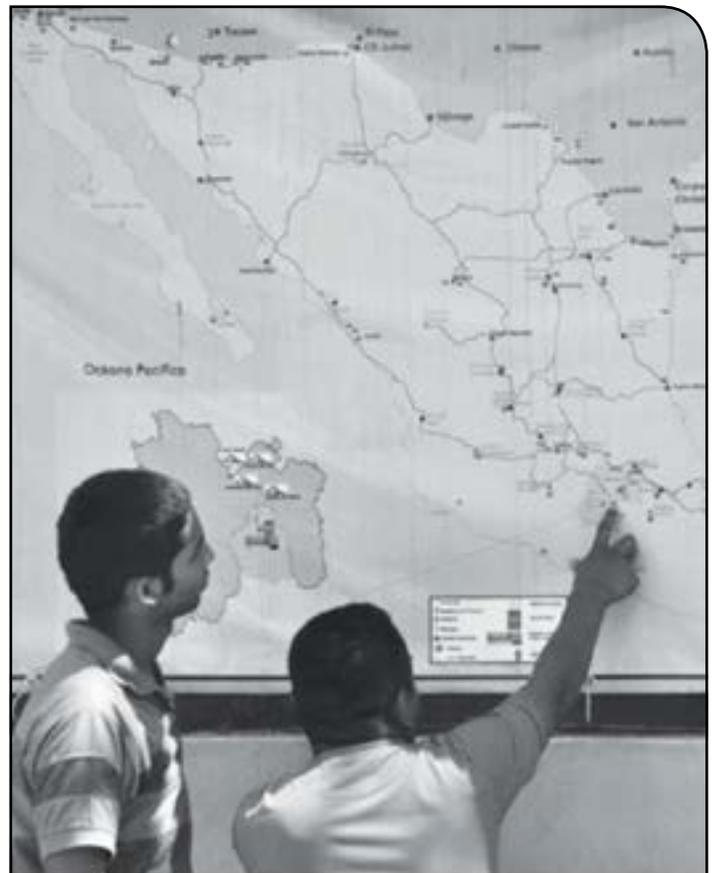
rico-congress-promises-a-new-dictatorship/

MORE THAN 150 GROUPS OPPOSE ‘OPERATION BORDER GUARDIAN’

In a letter to the White House on March 30, 2016, over 150 organizations expressed opposition to the latest Department of Homeland Security (DHS) raids that targeted 336 Central American refugees in the U.S. for deportation. “We, the undersigned organizations that serve and advocate for the protection of chil-

dren and youth, trafficking victims, refugees, and asylum seekers from around the world, write to express deep concern regarding continued raids upon Central American families and children. We ask the administration to stop targeting these individuals, the vast majority of whom have come to the United States fleeing violence and seeking safety.” Among the signers’ concerns are the lack of due process that led to the original removal orders, the climate of fear created in immigrant communities, and the deportation of refugees to face persecution and violence in their home countries.

For a copy of the letter with the list of signatories, see: https://drive.google.com/file/B_6gbFPjVDoxOXlkWkxLVVVBU0E/edit



Two Central American migrants plan the journey north. Photo: Joseph Sorrentino

**UPCOMING
EVENTS****You are Invited
to ROCLA's
May and June
Programs!**

The ROCLA programs we have planned for May and June are especially timely—both have been in the news recently and both feature well-known advocates with their communities. Mark your calendars to attend and bring your friends!

Wed., May 4, 7 PM: ROCLA will welcome four immigration advocates to discuss, **“Immigration Initiatives in New York State: 2016 and Beyond.”** Panelists will include Jackie Vimo, NY Immigration Coalition; Kemberly Gil, DREAMer and filmmaker; West Cosgrove, Rural & Migrant Ministry; and Carly Fox, Worker Justice Center of NY. The event is co-sponsored by the Greater Rochester Coalition for Immigration Justice.

Wed., June 1, 7 PM: The delightful Nuyorican (Puerto Rican from N.Y.) poet and activist Henry I. Padrón-Morales will present **“My Story/Our Story”** and will help us understand the current economic crisis in Puerto Rico. He has spent over thirty years writing about the oppression and dehumanizing effects of the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S.

All are welcome! Both events will be held at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St., Rochester, N.Y., which is looped for the hearing impaired and handicapped accessible.

**Join Rural & Migrant Ministry's
March for Farmworker Justice
and Farmworker Albany Day!**

RMM is organizing a 200-mile 2-week march beginning May 15, from Smithtown, Long Island, to Albany, N.Y., to push for passage of the Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Act (FFLPA). To build support for passing the FFLPA in Western New York, RMM will hold three events in solidarity with the march:

Sun., May 15, 12 PM: Pilgrim St. Luke's Church, 335 Richmond, Buffalo, N.Y. Press Conference and Rally

Sun., May 22, 3 PM: Grace Episcopal Church, 9 Phelps St., Lyons, N.Y. Farmworkers and their allies will gather for a mini march to the office of NYS Assemblyman Bob Oaks, followed by a potluck dinner at the church.

Fri., May 27, 12 PM: Workers' Center of Central NY, Syracuse, N.Y. Meal and March.

Wed., June 1, 2016: Farmworker Albany Day.



You are invited to join in any or all events!

For more information, go to: <http://ruralmigrantministry.org/farmworker-march>, or contact West Cosgrove at RMM, wcosgrovermm@gmail.com, Tel: (315) 871-4031 or (915) 443-4146. Sign a petition to Governor Cuomo, the NYS Senate and the NYS Assembly to pass the FFLPA at: <https://www.change.org/p/andrew-cuomo-pass-the-farmworker-fair-labor-practices-act-s-1291-a-4762>

**Guatemalan
Delegation to
Visit Rochester!**

By Tom Ward

Since 1996, Gates Presbyterian Church, Batavia Presbyterian Church and the people of the Baja Verapaz region of Guatemala near Rabinal, Panacal and Rio Negro, have developed a long lasting relationship. What started as a mission project with 36 Guatemalan families has grown to include over 400 Mayan families today!

Over the years, we have worked with these rural communities on organic farming and nutrition projects. Our project expanded to include a Mayan cooperative called Qachuu Aloom (Achi for Mother Earth) (www.qachuualoom.org) when we joined forces with The Garden's Edge (www.gardensedge.org).

We are pleased to announce that on June 22nd, four delegates from Guatemala will arrive in Rochester and will be hosted by local families. You are invited to our Bienvenida Party on **Saturday, June 25th** at the Churchville County Park from 12-4 PM. All are welcome! Hot dogs, lemonade and snacks will be provided. Let's give our friends a big WELCOME!

For more information, contact Tom Ward: (585) 341-3105 or tomw@rochesterymca.org

ROCLA MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 1973, the Rochester Committee on Latin America (ROCLA) seeks to build bridges between the Rochester, NY, community and the people of Latin America. Through its monthly presentations, speakers, films, and quarterly newsletters, ROCLA educates local residents about the culture, economics and politics of the countries of Central and South America, Mexico and the Caribbean and the ways globalization, U.S. trade and drug-war policies impact the lives of their people. ROCLA also supports the work of frontline organizations involved in working for justice and democracy in the global south, including the Latin America Solidarity Committee (LASC), Nicanet, Committee in Solidarity with the people of El Salvador (CISPES), Network In Solidarity with the people of Guatemala (NISGUA), Rights Action and the Pastors for Peace Cuba Friendship. We also encourage our members and others to advocate for U.S. policies that support human rights and reverse the often oppressive history of U.S. involvement in Latin America. Annually, ROCLA presents its international and local White Dove Awards for outstanding leadership and service in the cause of human rights in Latin America.

Steering Committee Marilyn Anderson, Paola Betchart, Kathy Goforth, Bob and Marilyn Kaiser, Grania Marcus, Arnie Matlin, Lew Montemaggi, Peter and Gail Mott, Lucienne Nicholson, Callie Rabe, Vic Vinkey, Tom Ward • **Publishing Team** Editor: Grania Marcus, Designer: Jim Anderson

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ROCLA UPDATE ON THE
AMERICAS

HELP KEEP ROCLA'S WEBSITE CURRENT!

ROCLA has an informative website (see: <http://rocla.us/>) where webmaster Jim Bearden posts current information about Latin America on an ongoing basis, as well as announcements of programs and other news. If you have information, articles or action opportunities about Latin America that you believe may be of interest to ROCLA members, please email the link or content to Jim at: jeb.bearden@gmail.com. ■

SIGN UP FOR ROCLA'S EMAIL LISTSERVE!

When you sign up for ROCLA's email list, you will receive your newsletter earlier than the print version and in color, and ROCLA will save the cost of paper and postage. To sign up for the ROCLA e-mail list, please go to www.rocla.us and **click on "Subscribe to ROCLA Email."** Then enter your name and email address and click on **"Subscribe."** Stay informed about ROCLA programs, upcoming events and urgent actions! ■