

ROCLA UPDATE ON THE AMERICAS

A PUBLICATION OF THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE ON LATIN AMERICA

2017 CUBA FRIENDSHIPMENT ROCLA PARTICIPATES FOR THE 26TH YEAR!



John Waller of IFCO/Pastors for Peace addresses ROCLA members and Nazareth College students at the Casa Hispana. Photo: Vic Vinkey

By Vic Vinkey

ROCLA members and friends, and Nazareth College students, commemorated ROCLA's 26th Cuba Friendshipment, and Pastors for Peace's 50th Anniversary celebration on April 20th at Nazareth College's Casa Hispana. Long time Pastors for Peace activist John Waller, on a national tour of many U.S. cities, spoke and continued the work of last year's Friendshipment with a focus on educating Americans and their legislators about further normalizing relations and ending the Cuban embargo.

Earlier that day, Vic Vinkey and Bob Kaiser from ROCLA, and John Waller and Sekani Radellen of Pastors for Peace, met with the aides of Senators Schumer and

Gillibrand, and Representative Slaughter in a joint meeting and asked them to support the continued process of normalization of U.S. relations with Cuba and the end of the Cuban Embargo. ROCLA later presented a \$1,000 check to IFCO/Pastors for

Peace at the Friendshipment event held later that evening to support their work.

The delegation reviewed the current progress in the U.S.'s relationship with Cuba brought about through the combined efforts of Pope Francis, Raul Castro and President Obama. Normalization of the U.S.'s relationship with our neighbors in Cuba cur-

rently rests primarily on President Obama's actions and could easily be overturned at the whim of President Trump. In addition, Congress originally passed the legislation enacting the blockade, and therefore ending the blockade requires Congressional action. To that end we urge support for the following bills currently before Congress.

IN THE SENATE

Agricultural Expansion Act (S.275)

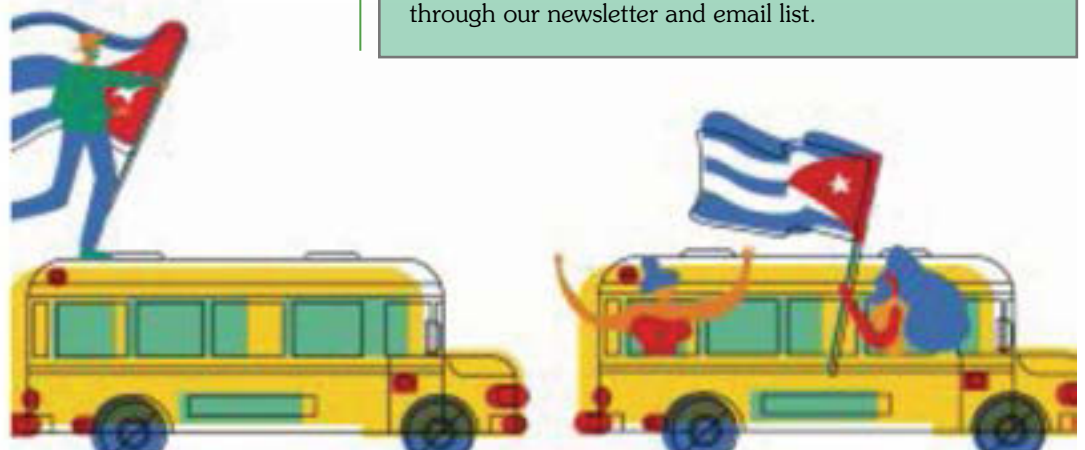
IN THE HOUSE

Cuba Agricultural Exports Act (H.R. 525)

Cuba Trade Act (H.R. 442)

Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act (H.R. 351)

Please contact your Senators and Representative and urge them to support these bills. (And thank Senator Gillibrand's office for hosting ROCLA's meeting with Congressional staff.) We will be providing more information about the progress of these bills and other normalization efforts through our newsletter and email list.





RICE & BEANS DINNER 2017

A CELEBRATION OF SUCCESSFUL FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE



PHOTOS: VIC VINKEY

Patricia Gualinga of the Kichwa community of Sarayaku poses with the International White Dove Award and Paola Betchart, ROCLA Steering Committee member from Ecuador.

By Grania Marcus

2017's White Dove winners, the indigenous Amazonian Kichwa community of Sarayaku, Ecuador, and local immigrant and worker rights organizations the Worker Justice Center of New York (WJCNY) and the Workers' Center of Central New York (WCCNY), epitomize what it takes to change economic structures that have decimated indigenous communities in Latin America and that

exploit vulnerable immigrant labor in the United States. ROCLA selected these honorees in keeping with its longstanding commitment to justice and democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean; their ongoing courageous struggles and their successes in organizing against oppression are models of what's needed to effectively fight entrenched power.

Representatives of these organizations, Patricia Gual-



Carly Fox and Rebecca Fuentes receive the local White Dove Award with members of the Alianza Agricola.

inga of Sarayaku, and Carly Fox and Rebecca Fuentes of WJCNY and WCCNY respectively, shared their experiences of what matters in struggles for justice: courage, direct engagement of those affected, the support of allies, and especially a commitment to the long haul. Their fights also demonstrate the strength of affected groups when they stand together against social and economic injustice.

Those who attended the 2017 Rice & Beans dinner enjoyed a great dinner by Peg Gefell, fabulous desserts provided by ROCLA members, a special dance performance by the young dancers of the Avenue D Afro-Latino Dance Group and very successful Silent and Live Auctions.

ROCLA Treasurer Kathy Goforth reports that ROCLA earned some \$5,500 through the Rice & Beans dinner, which means that ROCLA will have more funding than in 2016 to support the traditional Latin American solidar-



ROCLA Steering Committee member Tom Ward, auctioneer extraordinaire.

ity committees, and local and Latin American justice organizations that ROCLA has supported for years (ROCLA will publish the list of this year's contributions in the Summer newsletter), as well as some new grantees. The Silent Auction earned \$930, which ROCLA has donated to a local Legal Defense Fund for immigrants facing deportation. Thank you to our members and friends for your participation, commitment and generosity!



The youth of Avenue D Afro-Latino Dance Group perform for Rice & Beans Dinner guests.

Your ROCLA newsletter editor has decided to feature articles in 2017 about groups in Western New York fighting against President Trump's immigration policies. Our Western New York communities are seeing a significant increase in arrests and detentions of farmworkers and their families since the 2016 election. Many of those affected have lived and worked here for years, have US citizen children in school, have no criminal records and are dedicated essential workers in New York's agricultural industry. Even those with immigration cases that had been previously closed have been picked up and detained.

Advocates, organizers and service providers who have been working on the ground for years serving mostly Latino immigrants including farmworkers in our area, are mobilizing against the Trump administration's attacks on immigrant communities. Student, faith community, and other ally organizations such as Metro Justice, ROC/ACTS, SURG, GLOW Progressives, ROCitizen, are standing with members of directly affected groups such as the Alianza Agricola and Mujeres Divinas and other farmworkers and their families to challenge the heightened enforcement activity.

Key recent Western New York and Genesee Valley-area initiatives include organizing for drivers licenses through the **New York State Green Light: Driving Together** campaign, organizing **Rapid Response** networks to provide family support, raise bond funds and mount public campaigns including letter-writing, and the **Secure and Just Communities Alliance**, which meets with local officials, police chiefs and Sheriffs to minimize local law enforcement cooperation with Federal immigration authorities.

Below, we feature the work of the Secure and Just Communities Alliance, which presented at ROCLA's April program. We invite you to join and assist in this work in your own community. Trainings will be held in the near future for new allies. For more information about these initiatives, and how you can help, contact **Grania Marcus, graniamarcus@gmail.com**. [Ed.]



Border Patrol detains 2 women and 6 children on their way to church while Genesee students monitor the arrest and mobilize others. Photo: Clara Gallagher

A STORY THAT'S HAPPENING EVERYWHERE

By Anthony Macula

On March 23rd, 2017, in the Village of Genesee, a routine traffic stop led to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) detaining two women and six children on their way to church, including 2 infants and a toddler; 4 of the children are U.S. citizens.

Border Patrol became involved because local Genesee police called them when they learned that the car's occupants did not speak English and did not have proper ID in English. That almost immediately prompted a peaceful protest at the scene by concerned citizens and SUNY Genesee

students, a protest amplified on social media that quickly moved to the Border Patrol Station in Irondequoit where the detained women and children were taken, and grew to over 150 participants by 11 PM that night. Those detained were eventually released the next morning, but now face possible deportation.

Following this incident, a group of concerned citizens including members of the newly formed Rochester-area group Secure and Just Communities Alliance (SJCA) met with the Genesee Village Chief of Police to discuss the development of a formal policy

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on interactions with individuals with limited English proficiency who are stopped by local police or county Sheriffs.

The SJCA is an alliance of individuals and organizations working toward the common goal of securing protections for immigrants across the greater Western New York and Genesee Valley regions; members of SJCA previously worked on drafting the Rochester City Sanctuary ordinance that was passed on February 21, 2017. It focuses on limiting local law enforcement cooperation with Federal immigration authorities (such cooperation is not mandatory and many local police agencies are concerned about the negative effects of working to enforce immigration laws on their primary goal of protecting their communities.)

The people who met with Genesee officials shared the community policing policies of the NY State Police and the Wayne County Sheriff (these law enforcement agencies have significantly limited their cooperation with federal immigration authorities) and presented the guidelines recently issued by the New York State Attorney General clarifying the relationship between federal immigration enforcement agents (particularly Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Border Patrol), and state and local

law enforcement.

We also discussed the benefits of the Green Light New York initiative, a campaign to grant access to limited purpose drivers' licenses to all New Yorkers, including undocumented immigrants without Social Security numbers. The dialogue focused on ways to eliminate reliance on Border Patrol for identification purposes and interpretation needs, and to eliminate inquiries about immigration status during routine traffic stops.

The Village of Genesee Mayor, Village Board and the Chief of Police have all responded positively, and are seeking ways to uphold the law, while creating a policy that responds to minor traffic incidents in a humane and just manner. We expect to be able to comment on a draft policy soon.

Since then, the SJCA group has grown to include those working on similar ordinances and meeting with town officials and law enforcement in various Western New York counties and towns. If you would like to be part of the SJCA's work, contact **Carly Fox, carly.fox.wjcnj@docx.** ■

When you sign up for ROCLA's email list, you will receive your newsletter earlier than the print version and in color!

THANK YOU BERTA CACERES: "WAKE UP HUMANITY, WE ARE OUT OF TIME"



Berta Cáceres' brother Roberto kneels by Berta's grave, which says: "Despertemos humanidad, ya no hay tiempo." Berta Cáceres Flores, March 4, 1971 – March 2, 2016. "Wake up humanity, we are out of time."

Photos and commentary by Grahame Russell, Rights Action

Roberto Cáceres squats on March 5, 2017 by the grave of his sister Berta Cáceres, assassinated March 2, 2016, by the deeply corrupted and repressive Honduran regime that is – it bears repeating over and over – fully supported and empowered by the U.S. and Canadian governments, the World Bank and other global economic actors in the

"international community." Since the 2009 U.S. and Canadian-backed military coup, Honduras has become the most violent country in the world (highest murder rates in the world, according to the United Nations), and has the highest levels of government repression, corruption and impunity in the Americas.

Mama Berta – along with Berta's children, siblings and cousins, [and] Berta's organiza-

tion COPINH, along with Gustavo Castro (who was shot twice during the assassination of Berta Cáceres, and survived) and his organization Otros Mundos – has been at the forefront of political and legal efforts, inside Honduras and internationally, to have justice done for the killing of Berta.

Continuation of the military coup

To date, 8 men have been arrested for Berta's well planned and financed assassination. To date, none of the intellectual authors (those who planned and paid for the killing) have been arrested. There is no doubt that the assassination plot was hatched and paid for at the highest levels of Honduras' economic, military and political elites. Berta was that empowering to so many people that she – through her vision and life work and struggle – represented a real threat to their corrupted, repressive elites.

It also bears repetition that Berta's killing is the tip of the iceberg in Honduras. As Mama Berta and all family members are quick to remind everyone, hundreds of Hondurans have been assassinated and killed for political reasons, with complete impunity, since the 2009 military coup.

With the U.S. and Canada, with the World Bank and global



Wall art in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, that says “Berta lives.”

companies and investors maintaining or expanding economic, military and political relations with the corrupt, repressive regime, Honduras continues to be a hell-hole of exploitation and racism, government repression and generalized violence, corruption and impunity ...

... It is no surprise that tens of thousands of Hondurans are forced to flee north, year after year, to try and enter the U.S. The U.S., Canada and the “international community,” are perpetuating and benefiting from the very conditions that force so many to desperately flee north, even as the U.S. government and a sector of [its] society howls about “illegal” immigrants.

The racist, ugly and repressive crackdown against “illegals” in the U.S. begs the question: “why is there nothing ‘illegal’ about supporting and legitimizing a military coup and then perpetuating and

benefiting from the ensuing repression and violence, corruption and impunity?”

Berta lives

Even as Berta’s assassination – similar to all brutal, vicious deaths – leaves a gaping hole in the hearts and lives of family members and loved ones, it is also true that Berta’s vision and life-so-well-lived are planting seeds of empowerment, resistance and another-world-is-possible throughout Honduras, and beyond.

As a 2nd year begins of seeking justice for Berta’s assassination, an 8th year continues of denouncing and resisting the repression and racism, corruption and impunity of the Honduran regime, and an 8th year continues of denouncing and trying to hold accountable the U.S. and Canadian governments, the World Bank, and our companies and investors (in mining, African palm, bananas and sugar cane, sweatshop

garment industry, tourism, mining, etc.) for their complicit role in doing business as usual with and empowering and legitimizing the Honduran regime. ■

For more information on Honduras, and on Berta’s organization, COPINH (Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations): www.copin.org; copinhonduras.blogspot.com; www.facebook.com/copin. [intibuca](https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS); <https://twitter.com/COPINHONDURAS>; to support Rights Action’s funding for Berta Caceres’ family, COPINH, and Gustavo Castro’s organization Otros Mundos, make a tax deductible donation to Rights Action: Send a check payable to Rights Action (write “Justice for Berta” on memo line) and mail to: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887. To donate on line: <http://rightsaction.org/donate/>

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**JOIN US
FOR ROCLA’S
JUNE PROGRAM!**



Sister Phyllis (kneeling to the right of the woman holding the photo of Berta Caceres) and the inter-faith delegation to Honduras.

**Sister Phyllis Tierney, SSJ,
“Honduras: Dispelling the Myth”
Wednesday, June 7, 7 PM
Downtown United Presbyterian Church*
121 North Fitzhugh Street
Free and open to the public**

Sister Phyllis Tierney, SSJ, will present her experiences of a 10-day pilgrimage with the Inter-faith Movement for Human Integrity to Honduras in December 2016, to learn the root causes of growing migration from Honduras to the U.S. The group found that human rights abuses, assassinations of indigenous leaders seeking to protect their land and water rights, failures of government to protect their citizens from gang violence, and U.S. military and financial aid all play key roles in the increasing violence in Honduras and consequent migration. Her discussion will focus on Honduras and contiguous Northern Triangle areas where people are forced to flee to protect their very lives.

Sister Phyllis will offer her insights based on the many stories she heard from Honduran citizens. She is a long-time immigrant rights advocate and activist and member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester for 56 years. Since 2006, Sister Phyllis has served as Coordinator of the Congregation’s Justice and Peace office and is Editor of the Justice and Peace office’s bi-weekly newsletter, *Just Us*. You will also find her joining local delegations to legislators to advocate for justice for farmworkers and helping organize Rochester’s local “Nuns on the Bus” tours.

**The church is accessible to the handicapped and looped for the hearing impaired. ■*

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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! ■

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 Friendshipment. 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, Esperanza Roncero, Vic Vinkey, Tom Ward • **Publishing Team** Editor: Grania Marcus, Designer: Jim Anderson