

SOLIDARIDAD

 **Witness for Peace**
Transforming People — Transforming Policy

SUMMER 2010

Volume 2 Issue 3

Witness for Peace Delegates Win a Victory for Immigrant Rights and Fair Trade *By Sandra Dunn and Sara Joseph*

This spring, a Long Island teenager accused of killing an Ecuadorean immigrant was convicted of manslaughter as a hate crime. Marcelo Lucero and a friend were surrounded by seven teenagers at a train station when the boys attacked Lucero and his companion, hurling racial insults and taunts. Although his friend escaped, Lucero was not so lucky. The teens began punching Lucero in the face. When he tried to defend himself by brandishing his belt, one of the teens pulled out a knife and stabbed Lucero to death.

The hate crime against Lucero put a spotlight on rising anti-immigrant violence on Long Island. According to reports, Latinos in Suffolk County have been beaten with baseball bats and crowbars, hit with rocks and shot with pellet guns, among many other despicable acts of violence. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, over the past decade the anti-immigrant policies pursued by some Suffolk County elected officials set the stage for these acts of violence against Latino immigrants. And if that's the case, laws like Arizona's SB 1070 are creating dangerous conditions throughout the country. This type of anti-immigrant policy adds urgency to the need for deeper understanding about the roots of migration.

In the aftermath of the Lucero killing and in response to rising tensions around immigration on Long Island, 15 Nassau



Sergio Argueta, head of the STRONG Youth gang prevention program in Long Island, New York and Christine Finn, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum in the Patchogue-Medford School District traveled to San Juan Sosola, Mexico to investigate the roots of migration from Mexico to the United States.

PHOTO CREDIT: SANDRA DUNN

According to recent reports, Latinos in Suffolk County have been beaten with baseball bats and crowbars, hit with rocks and shot with pellet guns, among many other despicable acts of violence.

and Suffolk County residents joined a Witness for Peace delegation to Mexico to learn more about why people from Latin America are migrating to Long Island in the first place. Delegates included a police sergeant, educators with immigrant students in their classrooms and other local leaders. The group traveled to Oaxaca, a region many residents have left to search for work on Long Island.

What the delegates learned in Mexico was that as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the quantity of cheap imported corn in Mexico exploded, undercutting the locally grown product and driving small farmers out of business. It was a heady blow in a country where 10 million people—a quarter of the workforce—live off the land. Since NAFTA was enacted in 1994, roughly 2 million people have been displaced from the Mexican agricultural sector while the rural poverty rate has climbed to 85 percent. At the same time, nearly 600,000 farmers have been forced off the land and migrated to the U.S. In Oaxaca, the delegates met with members

(Continued on back page)

Message From Sharon

Last month we asked for your feedback as we began crafting a strategic plan for Witness for Peace's next five years.

For almost 30 years, Witness for Peace has relied on our partners on the ground in Latin America and on our grassroots base of activists, delegates and donors to guide our tactical plans and to implement effective strategies for changing foreign policies towards Latin America.

With your input and help, we have developed a dynamic delegations program, provided protective accompaniment and put a human face on the impact of U.S. policies. We have pressured government leaders for policies that promote peace, justice and sustainable economies.

And with your support, Witness for Peace organized the first nonviolent public protest ever held at the World Bank, helped negotiate the first union contract ever secured for sweatshop workers in Nicaragua and persuaded Congress to slow military aid to Colombia.

When we began the process of looking forward to the next five years, we wanted to know the aspects of our work that most inspire you, what you would like to see more of from WFP and which policies you think need to be changed most urgently.

Fortunately, many of you responded to our inquiry. With your instruction we have begun creating a plan for the next five years.

We stand firm in our mission to change U.S. policies and corporate practices that contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America. We will continue to stand with people who seek justice. We will persist in the struggle to

oppose U.S. military aid to fight the drug war and free market, free trade policies that result in the decimation of farm jobs and an increase in poverty.

Our biggest priorities moving forward in the next five years? Ending the forced eradication of illegal crops in Colombia and promoting comprehensive immigration reform by addressing the roots of migration.

We'll accomplish our goals by bringing more people to Latin America on transformative delegations that prepare them for organizing in their own communities to work for change. We'll stand in solidarity with our partners in Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia, Cuba and Honduras by documenting how U.S. foreign policies affect their lives. With strategic media outreach and direct action, we'll build an ever growing movement to urge our government representatives to pursue just policies towards Latin America.

And we'll do it with your help. Thank you for your support and guidance. We're looking forward to more success in the next five years!

Peace,



Sharon Hostetler,
Executive Director



DELEGATIONS

Colombia

January 14-24, 2011

Militarization and Human Rights

February 10-19, 2011

Exporting Militarism: Human Rights and the Drug War

March 12-21, 2011

Internal Displacement and Human Rights

June 19-29, 2011

Human Rights & Indigenous Movements

July 11-21, 2011

Meet Colombian Communities Resisting Repression

Cuba

Dates TBA

Professional Research Delegations in Consultation with Marazul Charters: Educators and Health Care Workers

Mexico

January 2011

The Roots of Migration

Spring 2011

Earlham College Studies the Roots of Migration

July 23-30, 2011

Following The Migration Trail from Oaxaca to the U.S. Border

Nicaragua

January 2-14, 2011

Montclair State University

January 12-21, 2011

Another World IS Possible: Sustainable Development and Fair Trade

January 15-25, 2011

Health Care Workers

July 13-27, 2011

Inter-Cultural Teen Delegation

For more information or inquiries about custom delegations, please contact Ken Crowley at ken@witnessforpeace.org or (202) 423-3402.



Witness for Peace delegates from Long Island study the forces driving migration from Mexico to New York.

PHOTO CREDIT: LONG ISLAND WINS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Grassroots Action

Witness for Peace New England is pleased to introduce our new Regional Organizer, Susan Letendre of North Kingstown, R.I. Susan has studied international trade and the roots and routes of migration both independently and with Witness for Peace.

Witness for Peace Northwest has returned from Oaxaca, Mexico, where 11 delegates researched trade, privatization and the roots of immigration. You can schedule a presentation from this special delegation in your community.

Witness for Peace Southeast will host Colombian singer, dancer and storyteller Daira Quiñones on a tri-state tour from October 3-24. The region will hold its annual retreat near Chapel Hill from October 8-9.

Witness for Peace Southwest will send a delegation to the U.S./Mexico border in September and launch a town hall meeting campaign to call the attention of congressional candidates to trade and immigration issues. Volunteers needed!

Witness for Peace Mid-Atlantic sent an urgent delegation to Honduras to stand in solidarity with the continued struggle for justice and democracy more than one year after the military coup. Activities this fall include a speaker's tour with a Honduran community leader and Witness for Peace partner as well as Migrating Toward Justice: Month of Action on Trade and Immigration activities in Philadelphia, New York and Washington, D.C.

Witness for Peace Upper Midwest welcomes Colombian human rights advocate Padre Jesus Alberto Franco on a speaker's tour this fall. The region is also hosting the traveling *Remember Me* exhibit about the disappeared, assassinated and displaced people of Colombia.

To get in touch with your regional organizer or to learn more about upcoming events and delegations, please visit witnessforpeace.org/grassroots.

Immigration Policy:

Keeping Immigration Reform a Federal Priority

For those of you charting Obama's progress on immigration policy, comprehensive reform may seem a lost cause this year. And with the failure of reform at the federal level, states are taking matters into their own hands, drafting and passing draconian anti-immigrant legislation such as SB 1070 in Arizona and 287(g) agreements that convert police into de facto ICE agents. Now it's critical to pressure the Obama Administration to revoke federal authorization for hate-filled policies that separate families and encourage raids, deportations, border militarization and racial profiling.

Not one of the 4,130 words in President Obama's recent speech about immigration addressed why people migrate in the first place. There was no mention of unfair trade, discussion of displaced farmers, or acknowledgment that Mexico's migration rate doubled after NAFTA.

Through transformative delegations and grassroots organizing, Witness for Peace educates thousands of people about the roots of forced migration. To help expose these roots of migration in your own community, please join us for Migrating Toward Justice: Month of Action on Trade and Immigration. (see article to the right).

Cuba Update:

Window of Opportunity to End the Travel Ban

We are on the verge of making history. In the next few weeks, we could topple the decades-old ban on travel to Cuba. Thanks to your unwavering advocacy, we have gained unprecedented support for HR 4645, the bill to reinstate our freedom to travel to Cuba. Waves of calls and letters from activists, farmers, students and pastors prompted several dozen representatives to announce fresh support this year for HR 4645. In June, your pressure pushed HR 4645 over a major legislative hurdle when the House Agriculture Committee voted to pass the bill. So take a moment for some well-deserved celebration!

But then let's get back to the task at hand: securing the right to travel to Cuba. This fall, we need to redouble our efforts and continue to pressure our legislators to support HR 4645. We will have a short window of opportunity soon after Congress returns from recess to pass the bill in the House Foreign Affairs Committee and get it to the floor for a full vote. Your pressure and activism will be crucial in making the freedom to travel to Cuba a reality. Stay tuned for email alerts to remind your Representatives of their responsibility to end the absurd travel ban and start treating Cuba like the neighbor it is.

Migrating Toward Justice:

Month of Action on Trade and Immigration



Betty Marin and Paola Gutierrez Galindo at the 2009 Trade Action Day rally in Washington, DC.

With each passing day, the need for immigration reform grows larger. But without changing foreign economic policies such as free trade agreements, people in Latin America will face continued pressure to leave their homes and migrate to the U.S.

Popular debates on immigration rarely address why people migrate. There's no discussion of unfair trade, mention of displaced farmers, or acknowledgment that the immigration rate doubled after NAFTA transformed U.S.-Mexican trade. To address both sides of the immigration coin, our fall Migrating Toward Justice campaign will connect the dots between unjust trade and forced migration. The October campaign provides an opportunity for immigrant rights activists, trade activists, unionists, students, people of faith and all concerned individuals to press for immigration and trade reform.

This fall, thousands of people will organize and attend events that highlight the links between trade and migration through poetry, video and art. Schools, churches and community groups across the country will host public performances and rallies to generate media coverage of the underreported roots of migration. It is only with your support and activism that we will achieve immigration reform that truly respects immigrants and rectifies trade injustice at its root. Please join us in October for the Month of Action on Trade and Immigration and stay tuned for campaign alerts and resources from National Grassroots Organizer, Catalina Nieto.

For full program updates and travel schedule details, visit www.witnessforpeace.org.

(Continued from front page)

of many divided families, many of whose loved ones now live in the U.S.

“Grasping the dire need of impoverished communities on the brink of extinction—a poverty that forces individuals to leave family, culture and country—was an unforgettable experience,” said delegate Sergio Argueta.

After returning to Long Island, the delegates swung into action, bringing immigrants and native-born residents together to discuss immigration policies and reform. They spoke with reporters, published opinion pieces and gave presentations in schools and to the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission and other community organizations. As delegate Daphney Pierre explained, “I grew as an individual and as an American citizen during this delegation. I was changed, as were the other delegates. From there I decided to be a part of this movement and help in any way I can. I mostly learned that as a college student I can be a voice and activist for those who are ignored and denied justice.”

But it was clear from the delegates’ experience in Mexico that change isn’t just necessary for immigration policy: migration must be addressed at a foreign policy level as well. As long as free trade makes life unlivable for so many people south of the border, the immigration issue will be unsolvable. The Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment



Hundreds of people attended a rally for immigration reform in West Hempstead, New York on May 1st, 2010.

PHOTO CREDIT: LONG ISLAND WINS



Professor Gary Mar of Stony Brook University washes dishes at his homestay in the state of Oaxaca. Since returning from the delegation, he has organized three educational events promoting greater understanding between immigrants and native-born residents on Long Island.

PHOTO CREDIT: SANDRA DUNN

(TRADE) Act, introduced in 2009, would renegotiate NAFTA and addresses the economic policies that have devastated Mexico. By allowing countries like Mexico to protect their own agricultural system, the TRADE Act supports rather than displaces small-scale farmers, allowing those who wish to stay in their communities to do so.

After returning to Long Island, several Witness for Peace delegates set up a meeting with Congressman Tim Bishop of New York’s first district. Within two weeks of the meeting, the congressman signed on as a co-sponsor of the TRADE Act.

The Long Island/Oaxaca delegation represents a Witness for Peace educational model that works to ease tensions between long-time residents and newly-arrived immigrants. The idea is to create champions for progressive immigration reform by sponsoring the travel of key local leaders to the “sending” Mexican communities of recent immigrants. As delegate Rahsmia Zatar said, “I...gain[ed] a deeper understanding of the complexities behind immigration while increasing my

motivation for educating Americans on how we can create positive change for us all.”

With draconian immigration policies like Arizona’s SB 1070 threatening immigrant rights and safety, addressing the roots of migration becomes more and more urgent. Without any analysis of unfair trade or mention of displaced farmers, anti-immigrant legislation like that being pursued by Arizona will continue to cultivate an environment where crimes like Lucero’s murder are likely.

But with the Witness for Peace model, community leaders in the U.S. are forming personal relationships with their counterparts in “sending” communities in Mexico. Local policymakers are hearing first-hand a clear articulation of the links between U.S. economic policies and the roots of migration. Hundreds—if not thousands—of U.S. citizens will be more educated about these important policy issues as well.

And in the longer term, these personal relationships and new understandings will pave the way for just and humane immigration policies in the future.

Sandra Dunn is the Immigration Program Officer at the Hagedorn Foundation. Sara Joseph is Witness for Peace’s Communications Associate.