



**Code Z59.5**

**There Is Only One People Here**

**By Grahame Russell**

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## Dedication

To my children Camila and Lucas, and their mother Victoria ... that all children can have a childhood like the one I had, like the one I hope we are providing to you. To my parents, brother and sisters, grandparents and cousins ... that all families can live long and healthy lives, connected, mutually supporting, loving and thankful. To friends near and far ... that all people can be born and raised into secure, supportive and healthy communities. To Annie, Bertha, Carlos, Miriam, Jesus, Mirna, Javier ... and all people who work and struggle for fundamental and lasting equality between all people, all nations, all life forms, in harmony and balance with Mother Earth.

### **SPECIAL TRIBUTE - Oj K'aslik**

To the victims-survivors of so many abuses and atrocities, who become protagonists and architects of just and balanced communities, countries and the global community. *Oj K'aslik* - "We are alive" in the Maya-Achi language.

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

To Tory, Scott and John for editing and suggestions.

I look forward to hearing from you - your reactions and comments.

Grahame Russell  
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## Introduction

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With my children, Camila, aged six, and Lucas, three, we walked through our Washington DC neighborhood.

Lucas says: "There is only one people here."

"Who is that?" I ask.

"There is Camila and me and you – one people."

(January 3, 2000)

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*Code Z59.5: There Is Only One People Here* is a series of diary excerpts (comments, facts, quotes, etc.) from the 1990s and 2000s. The excerpts are presented mostly in the order they appeared in my diaries. The reader may find patterns that emerge.

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"Radical simply means  
"grasping things at the root"."

(Angela Davis)

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### **THE NEVER ENDING**

At age 19, lifelong friend Wayne Rosen gave me my first *Nothing Book* and I began keeping a journal. At that time, I was a ski racer. In my early 20s, I "discovered" Latin America, another European descendant person "discovering" America.

After working (1984-85) in the *Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos* orphanage in Mexico, I spent three summers (1985, 86, 87) leading delegations of North Americans to Nicaragua to learn about the efforts of the government – led by the *Sandinistas* – to transform Nicaragua from an unjust, exploitative society, to one based on fairness, democracy and the rule of law. Much I learned, working

in solidarity with the Nicaraguan people, watching their dreams and work crushed by the USA-Contras. Tens of thousands were killed.

From 1989-1993, I worked with CODEHUCA (Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America). Based in Costa Rica, CODEHUCA was affiliated with non-government human rights commissions in Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Belize. My work took me travelling regularly to each of these countries. Much I learned. Through the 1980s, and early 1990s, hundreds of thousands were killed and disappeared.

In 1992, I published *The Never Ending*, a small book of diary excerpts, based on the work I had been doing with CODEHUCA.

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"International solidarity is not an act of charity. It is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains toward the same objective. The foremost of these objectives is to aid the development of humanity to the highest level possible."  
(Samora Machel, 1933-1986, First President of Mozambique)

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### MY DAY JOB

This is a not-for-profit, self-published book. My goal is education and debate. I have done my best to properly quote people and cite sources. All mistakes and absences are my own.

When not scribbling in my diary, my work has had two main focuses. One, to get funds and other types of support into the hands of people and locally-controlled organizations working on a wide range of self-help projects in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as Chiapas, Oaxaca and El Salvador.

These projects include promoting a just and fair economic-development model; defending and protecting the environment; disaster relief; defending human and indigenous rights; working to end the impunity of the powerful nations, governments, companies, banks and "development" institutions; and building respect for the rule of law and democracy from the community to the global levels.

The second aspect of my work is education, enabling the beneficiaries and profiteers of global wealth and power inequality

to understand our role in many of these injustices and sufferings. This book is related to the second point.

### FROM ANGER TO GOOD ACTION

The injustices and sufferings make me sad and angry – sad for the direct and generational affects of the injustices and sufferings; angry because the sufferings are not accidents, but rather the result of deliberate human actions and our systems of wealth and power distribution, of poverty and powerlessness distribution.

Yet, working from a place of anger is not a productive way of achieving the political-legal and cultural-moral changes we need to bring about a just and equal global order.

Moreover, it is impossible to remain angry after having met so many amazing people, north, south, east and west, living and working for a global order based on equality, justice and harmony with Mother Earth. Because of these amazing people, I work from a place of satisfaction, friendship, community and resolve.

"To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives.

If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something.

If we remember those times and places - and there are so many - where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."

(Howard Zinn, "You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A personal history of our times")



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"Action is the mother of hope"  
(Pablo Neruda)

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"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time.  
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with  
mine,

then let us work together."  
(Lilla Watson, Indigenous activist and organizer)

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Grahame Russell, February 2010

## Code Z59.5

There Is Only One People Here

## THE EARTH IS A SATELLITE OF THE MOON

By Leonel Rugama

Apollo 2 cost more than Apollo 1.  
 Apollo 1 cost plenty.  
 Apollo 3 cost more than Apollo 2.  
 Apollo 2 cost more than Apollo 1.  
 Apollo 1 cost plenty.  
 Apollo 4 cost more than Apollo 3.  
 Apollo 3 cost more than Apollo 2.  
 Apollo 2 cost more than Apollo 1.  
 Apollo 1 cost plenty. Apollo 8 cost a fortune, but no one minded because the astronauts were Protestant, they read the Bible from the moon, astounding and delighting every Christian, and on their return Pope Paul VI gave them his blessing.  
 Apollo 9 costs more than all these put together, including Apollo 1, which cost plenty.

The great-grandparents of the people of Acahualinca were less hungry than their grandparents were.  
 The great-grandparents died of hunger.  
 The grandparents of the people of Acahualinca were less hungry than their parents were.  
 The grandparents died of hunger.  
 The parents of the people of Acahualinca were less hungry than their children were.  
 The parents died of hunger.  
 The people of Acahualinca are less hungry than their children are.  
 The children of the people of Acahualinca are not born to be hungry.  
 They hunger to be born, only to die of hunger.

Blessed are the poor, for, because of them, we send rockets to the moon.

*Leonel Rugama is a Nicaraguan man killed in 1978 fighting the Somoza dictatorship that was kept in place both militarily and economically by the USA. Translated by author.*



## 1993-1995: "A Blue Room"

### GUATEMALA

From August 1993 – August 1995, I lived in Guatemala, working for EPICA (Ecumenical Program on Central America) and MINUGUA (United Nations Human Rights Mission for Guatemala). My work took me traveling throughout Guatemala and, after the "Zapatista Uprising" January 1, 1994, through Chiapas, Mexico.

Since the invasion of the Europeans (the "conquest"), beginning in 1492 there has been chronic and systemic racism, exploitation and repression across what is now called the "Americas". Eduardo Galeano's Open Veins of Latin America is the book I most recommend to get a historical perspective on the Latin America of today.

Of the countries the European conquistadores carved out of the Americas, Guatemala has been one of the most repressive and exploitative. Except for the 1944-1954 interlude, Guatemala has never been a democracy where the judicial system worked and human rights were respected. Impunity for and repression by the powerful sectors have been constants.

One of the worst periods of repression in Guatemala was that of the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, known as la violencia (the violence). I moved to Guatemala as it was barely exiting from this most brutal of times.

### "IT [CERTAINLY] DOESN'T TAKE A HERO"

Former U.S. General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, wrote a book about the 1991 invasion that directly killed 200,000 Iraqis; many more died due to causes related to the war. His best-seller: *It Doesn't Take a Hero*.

### CONTRASTS, NORTH AND SOUTH

My friend Francisco is a massacre survivor from El Salvador. Today, we walked in the autumn splendor near Toronto. Later, by the fireplace, during the year's first snow fall, Francisco jokes that this home looks like an estate of the Salvadoran oligarchy. Years before, in 1982, nine-year-old Francisco watched, cowering in the corner of his rural family hut, as his family was massacred with machetes and bullets by the Salvadoran Army that was "fighting communists" on behalf of the oligarchy, the U.S. and western nations like Canada, Britain, France. Francisco remembers forever the blood of his family that splattered on his clothes, face and arms.

### LIFE OF A LAWYER AND FATHER

I was fortunate to visit with Fernando again. In his Guatemala City office, we talked of how my baby Camila is two days older, and many pounds heavier than his baby Pedro; of how in September (1993) his office was bombed – he points at the shrapnel damage in his desk, on his walls and bookshelves. His job: human rights lawyer.

### DREAM WORLD

Hockey player Doug Gilmour comments on his \$3.5 million/year contract: "I live in a small condo. I drive a jeep. I'm happy. Sometimes you can't help but think you're in a dream world." (*Toronto Star*, October 12, 1993)

### THINGS THE MEDIA NEGLECTS TO TELL US

A front page news article reports on the sins of Cuban leader Fidel Castro, predicting his imminent fall, arguing: Communists are repressive and inhuman; Castro is a tyrant, etc.

Buried in the paper, a photo of the Haitian Minister of Justice lying blood-splattered on the ground, gunned down by military death squads. The paper omits to mention that Haitian military regime, elites and death squads have long been backed by the U.S., Canada and France, who are officially not repressive and inhuman.

### THE COURAGE TO DIG

A group of people (all poor, mainly Indigenous Mayan) stand around a huge pit ("mass grave") being dug up ("exhumed") by forensic anthropologists in a place called Rio Negro, Rabinal.

On March 13, 1982, in this isolated village, the Guatemalan Army murdered close to 200 Mayan-Achi women and children, pitched their bodies in a pit, and covered up the crime. Mass graves (*fosas comunes* or *cementerios clandestinos*) are now part of Guatemala's daily language.

Looking at their faces: Where do they find the courage to exhume the remains of their loved ones?

### BUSINESS TALK

A Haitian man: "Frankly, I was quite happy with the coup (Haitian military ousting President Aristide). I gave the military food supplies they requisitioned from my warehouses. I do not like Aristide and I thought that Army Chief Lt. General Cedras would be another Pinochet, but he is not. He is a failure."

The U.S.- and French-backed regime in Haiti has murdered 4,000 people in three years since they deposed Aristide in 1991.

### AN AMERICAN DREAM: "SELFLESS HUMANITARIANISM" IN HAITI

Orilia Joseph was a human rights activist. In Haiti, she was kidnapped, tortured, burned, decapitated, and dumped in the streets of the Cite Soleil slum. A U.S. Congressman offers words of condolence to Orilia's surviving daughters – eyewitnesses to the kidnapping, who are still hiding out in Haiti. He suggests they apply for political asylum: "What happens in Haiti matters. The pitiful plight of any human's suffering pulls at our hearts; that's the



way we are as a nation. ... Our [U.S.] involvement there began in a spirit of selfless humanitarianism, and continues to be so." (As reported by Tom Fielder, *Miami Herald*, October 16, 1993)

### GLOBALIZATION FACTS AND FIGURES

National Basketball Association rookie Chris Webber's contract is US\$95 million for 15 years.

### HARD BEDS

Carrying my baby daughter Camila, we walk quiet Sunday streets in Zone 1, Guatemala City. "Street children" are getting up from their beds of cardboard and cement. In the restaurant, past the guard with his rapid-fire shotgun, hand-gun stuck in his belt, people sit relaxed, read newspapers, and smile at Camila.

### ME DA COLERA (IT MAKES ME ANGRY)

Guatemala ranks third in Latin America, behind Peru and Brazil, in cases of cholera reported, and numbers of persons killed by it. Only poor people die of cholera. "Development" experts and mainstream economists have yet to find a way to prevent the spread of this disease.

### CONTRASTING PHOTOS

A photo, full color, on the back page of the *La Revista Domingo* section of a Guatemalan newspaper: A blonde model in a bikini. Caption: "A sunset, completely neutralized by the beauty of this super chick, who shows off this daring bathing suit. A suggestion: Use your imagination ...!"

A photo on page one: The skull of an indigenous Mayan-Achi woman whose cadaver was just exhumed from the mass grave in the abandoned rural village of Rio Negro, Rabinal. (*Prensa Libre*, November 7, 1993)

### WHO BLESSES THE BEGGARS

Beggars on the streets of Guatemala say "Que dios le bendiga?" if you give them 25 centavos. For 4 cents, the forsaken ask God to bless you.

### TWO BEAUTIFUL SMILES

Tattered clothes hung loose on her thin body, as she walked unevenly towards us along a Zone 1, Guatemala City sidewalk. Just at the point when I could smell her unwashed, abused life, she broke out in a beautiful, toothless smile, spying my baby daughter Camila perched on my back, looking over my shoulder, smiling at her.

### AMERICAN "PUBLIC SERVICE"

"The C.I.A. had Haiti plotters on payroll, officials say," reads a newspaper headline. The article does not report about decades of U.S. military training, weaponry and financing for the Haitian military and the *Ton-Ton Macoute* death squads.

U.S. Congressman Robert Torricelli explains: "The U.S. government develops relationships with ambitious young men at the beginning of their careers, and often follows them through their public service." (*Miami Herald*, November 3, 1993)

### "YOUTH WITH NO FUTURE"

Psychologists and journalists express concern as the number of suicides in Nicaragua increases: "predominantly amongst the *jovenes sin futuro* (youth with no future)", the Mayor of Managua said.

Alexander Watson, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, "unveils (for the House Subcommittee on Hemispheric affairs) a new U.S. policy on Nicaragua," that Nicaragua "not look for the answers to all of their problems in Washington".

... that Nicaragua "not look for the answers to all of [its] problems in Washington".



I imagine the rapist saying of his victim: "Don't come to me with your problems of trauma, pain, shame and anxiety". I imagine the racist saying of his slaves: "All I have ever done was try to help them..."

Neither the Assistant Secretary of State nor the media refer to the 1980s U.S.-Contra war that killed over 30,000 Nicaraguans, intentionally wrecked the economy, impoverished the majority and poisoned the country with a cancer that might be malignant. (*La Republica*, Guatemala, November 14, 1993; *Miami Herald*, October 23, 1993)

### STATING THE OBVIOUS

The Association of Retired and Pensioned Persons of Guatemala is concerned that some members are contemplating suicide to protest their monthly pension of 12 quetzales (\$2). "This is not enough to survive," said a member of the Association.

### DISAPPEARANCES, DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

From 1981 to 1990, the U.S. had 14 military bases in Honduras and gave the Honduran military (found guilty by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of "disappearing" civilians in the 1980s) hundreds of millions of dollars in military "aid".

Repression continues today, unabated. 200 Lenca Indians recently died of starvation, an obscure disease for which development experts and economists can find no cure. Current U.S. Ambassador to Honduras William Pryce: "I am impressed how much democracy there is in Honduras."

### WHO IS RADICAL

King Juan Carlos of Spain calls for an "end to radicalism" in Nicaragua, referring to the Sandinista government (1979-1990) that implemented programs to get rid of hunger, give people jobs and guarantee access to health and education. The King is descendent of slave traders, murderers of Mayans, Incas, Aztecs and invaders of continents. Were these acts of the Spanish monarchy, sanctified by the Catholic Church, not "radical"?

### "EVERYONE IS FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ..."

"The problem with human rights and peace is that they are political and controversial. You wouldn't think so. Everyone is for peace and human rights, except when the rights of someone many miles away affect your earning power or stock dividends." (Letter from Heidi Brandt, September 23, 1993)

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"If you are not offending people who ought to be offended, you are doing something wrong." (Noam Chomsky)

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### ADMINISTRATION OF (IN)JUSTICE

The Guatemalan Constitution recognizes the legal principle that "ignorance of the law is not a defense". In a country where ignorance of the law is just about the same high level as the massive illiteracy, one might think this principle is crucial. It's not. The Constitution's greatest violators are the wealthy literates. As a Uruguayan general once famously remarked: "for my friends, everything; for my enemies, the law." This is how the illiterate masses learn about the law.

### THE ROOTS OF REBELLION AND FEAR

In a 7th Avenue cafe, Israel explained to me the roots of the Guatemalan conflict: the majority of the population lives in poverty; they organize to fight for their rights; the government and oligarchy use repression in response.

A man walked in, red tie tight against a crisp white collar, and sat at the next table in the empty restaurant. Israel passed me a note: "Let's talk somewhere else," suspecting that the man was an *oreja* (literally "ear", meaning spy), there to listen to what a foreigner was learning from a Mayan human rights activist.

### SOME KIDNAPPINGS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHERS

In Guatemala, wealthy people are now being kidnapped for ransom. Some kidnappers (masked armed men) are former or still active military and police. These kidnappings receive extensive

news coverage. U.S. ambassador Marilyn McAfee expresses President Clinton's concern that these crimes are bad for business and democracy. No U.S. President ever expressed concern that the kidnappings and "disappearances" of 50,000 civilians in Guatemala's dirty war "against communism" were bad for business or democracy.

### A HOME OF BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS

In Zone 9, Guatemala City, the Papal Annunciate lives on an entire city block. Pine trees, well kept lawns, fountains and ponds surround the mansion. The Catholic Church collaborated historically with the slave trade, the European conquest and robbing of Indigenous lands and culture in the Americas, and, more recently, the crimes of armies and death squad; those Catholic priests and lay people who rejected this alliance and sided with the poor were shot in the hundreds and thousands across the Americas.

### CHRISTMAS CHEER ... FOR THEM WHO CAN AFFORD IT

Santa hugs children, rings his bell, bellows "ho-ho-ho", while handing out gifts and best wishes for all ... for the few who can make it to exclusive malls in an upscale neighborhoods in San Salvador. Santa will come to similar malls in Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Honduras, etc.

### SUBVERSIVE IDEAS ABOUT HUNGER AND POVERTY

"The eradication of hunger is a question of political will. The world produces a sufficient amount of food to feed everyone. The problem isn't technical, but rather social and political. It is a problem of access to food reserves, of distribution, and of rights ... Hunger is often the result of development models that favor the economics and life styles of urban populations, to the detriment of the countryside ... The priority given to export products is further detrimental to local food production."

If this were said in Central America in the 1970s, 80s and early 90s, you were labeled a "commie" (perhaps a zealot!) and targeted for repression by the Army and death squads. The United Nations Secretary General said this.

### CRUCIAL LIFE DECISIONS

On the porch of our Zone 1 apartment, Guatemala City, we stare out over rooftop clotheslines, pigeons, distant mountains and we tell stories.

Rolando recounts how a few years ago he was investigating the massacres in Rabinal, which needed a lot of investigation, because there were so many. One afternoon, outside his office, two men grabbed him and shoved him against the wall. One stuck a pistol between his eyes: "Stop your work; stop investigating ..." After half a minute, they walked away. Rolando did too, shaking; he didn't go into work that day. He quit his job, moved to another city ... but he did complete the investigation, and he still works for human rights, justice and equality.

### WHO OR WHAT IS TO BLAME

In Zone 1, Guatemala City, a baby was found in a pile of garbage. The infant will be handed over to an under funded orphanage and—in a few years—may become a "street kid". Found wrapped in plastic on which was written: *Feliz Navidad* (Merry Christmas), the *La Republica* newspaper blames the mother for this crime. (December 5, 1993)

### CURRYING FAVOR FROM GOD

December 12 is the day of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* who, it is written, appeared in Indigenous clothing in Guatemala. Every year, the *ladino* (Spanish-Indigenous mixed) population dress their kids in Mayan clothing, not in respect for the Mayan people who may be beggars on the corner or work as slave labor on the *ladino* plantations, but to curry favor from God.

### SALVADORAN "PEACE" PROCESS

In El Salvador, Andres Bonilla, brother of the FMLN's candidate for mayor, was gunned down by death squads.



### "THIRD WORLD" ADVENTURES

The Sun Line Cruises travel company advertises: "From Cuna Indians to the chocolate mousse, our Panama Canal Cruise will definitely satisfy your appetite for adventure." (*The New Yorker*, December 6, 1993) "Who are the Cuna Indians?" a tourist might ask, savoring their mousse, sitting on the deck, watching the sun over Panama City that the U.S. Armed Forces bombed mercilessly in 1989. Called "Operation Just Cause", that American invasion was some kind of adventure.

### EXCEPTIONAL INEQUALITY: REMINDING THE POOR THEY ARE POOR

DeBeers advertisement: "The first time I gave her a diamond ring, chills ran up both spines ... I'll always remember that face. The smile bordering on a tear. Silence as powerful as music. Eyes as lively as the diamond I nervously slipped on her finger. ... Exceptional woman, exceptional diamond ... An exceptional diamond of two carats, or more, is so rare that fewer than one percent of women will ever own one." (*The New Yorker*, December 6, 1993)

### WHERE DO "COMMUNIST REBELS" COME FROM

Sebastian Coc Mejia's face stares from the newspaper, as he is taken to jail in Guatemala. He is a Mayan guerilla fighter, demonized as a "communist", a "Marxist". Sebastian relates how, living poor and exploited in rural Guatemala, he joined the guerillas after the Army assassinated his brother and other unarmed community members.

### THE DANGEROUS TRUTH ABOUT "THE BMW BRIGADE"

Years after the brutal conflict in El Salvador, the media reports on U.S. involvement. William Walker, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, referred to a U.S.-trained and armed death squad as the "BMW Brigade" - the sons of the wealthy elite. Questioned about this, El Salvadoran President Cristiani said: "This information is part of a history that should be left behind because since January 1992 we are building our democracy. ... This information might endanger the peace process the country is living." (*Prensa Libre*, December 16, 1993)

### CHIAPAS

January 1, 1994, marked the day that NAFTA (the North American "Free" Trade Agreement between Canada, the USA and Mexico) came into effect.

January 1, 1994, marked the day the Zapatista Mayan social uprising (spear headed by the EZLN, Zapatista Army for National Liberation) came into the open in Chiapas, the southern most state of Mexico, bordering Guatemala.

From Guatemala City, I began to regularly make the 8-hour drive north into Chiapas, to support human rights and emergency relief work.

As the months and years went by, I came more and more to respect the Zapatista vision of defense and promotion of their human and Indigenous rights, their vision of community controlled development and protection and respect for the environment (la Madre Tierra).

### HAPPY NEW YEAR - ZAPATISTA STYLE

NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) comes into force across North America and Mexico, including a place few have heard or cared about - Chiapas. The Zapatista Liberation Army (EZLN) has taken up weapons to challenge the new world order, same as the old, full of massive wealth and privilege, massive poverty and repression.

"Don't kid yourself" a Mexican human rights worker states, "there is no poverty that is not linked to wealth - wealth that is created by the same economic and legal system that exploits the poor, keeping them in poverty."

On January 1, 1994, the Zapatistas ask Mexico - and the world - what has changed since Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa fought for the rights of landless farmers and Indigenous peoples in 1910 during the Mexican Revolution?

The Mexican human rights worker: "There was extensive poverty in our 'capitalist' countries before the Cold War and there is even

greater poverty after."

55 dead so far, or maybe 200, in the fighting between the Mexican Army and the Zapatistas, "but this total is not nearly as many as they who die from an endless list of preventable diseases, born and raised to die in conditions of poverty and misery" the Mexican human rights worker concludes.

### WHAT IS POVERTY

What is poverty? We know this word. It's in the news all the time, but no one ever explains how it is caused and that it is violence. It kills people, slowly or quickly, and it kills more people than all the wars and repression put together. "... For [President Salinas and the political power holders in Mexico who signed NAFTA] it doesn't matter that we possess nothing, absolutely nothing, no houses, no land, no work, no education", says a member of the EZLN.

### RADICAL PRESS COVERAGE

The *Washington Post*, in a January editorial, opines about the Zapatista revolution: "The principle threat to democracy in Latin America comes from corruption and the great gap between the rich and the poor".

It is not so shocking that the *Washington Post* writes like true Marxists, pointing out that the enormous gap between poverty and wealth is a major impediment to real democracy.

What is shocking (and depressing) is that for the last 40 years the *Post*, the *New York Times*, and much of the "free" news services (owned by huge companies) have religiously denied (lied about) the fact that the gap between wealth and poverty is the main underlying cause of despair, death and revolution throughout Central and South America.

For years, the "free" press has trotted out anti-communist rhetoric, justifying U.S. government decisions to back military and civilian governments of every repressive stripe, as long as they hated "commies", used repression and force against anyone or organization that spoke out against the reigning social-economic order, and supported international investment and "free" trade.

### THE "INDIGENOUS PROBLEM"

Driving on the Pan-American Highway, north from Guatemala City towards Chiapas, we pass two Guatemalan military trucks, 50 millimeter machine-guns mounted on the back, soldiers on the watch. The conditions of exploitation, poverty and repression against millions of Mayan-Indigenous people in Guatemala are worse than in Mexico. From Argentina to Canada, governments and elites in the Americas watch with concern as to how Mexico handles its "Indigenous problem" in Chiapas.

### UNDERLYING CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Busing along the Pan-American Highway, towards Chiapas, I read a newspaper; a Mayan *campesino* man peers over my shoulder. When I finish, I offer him the paper. "No gracias, I don't know how to read".

### JAIL-LIKE CONDITIONS

A steep and beautiful Canyon runs 50 kilometers from Huehuetenango, Guatemala, down to La Mesilla border crossing into Mexico. We drive along in our VW bug on the way to Chiapas. By the road a man is sledge-hammering a huge rock, to make gravel that he will sell, pile by pile. My Guatemalan friend says "this is how they make prisoners work in the U.S."

### CHIAPAS MILITARY BLOCKADES #1 and #2

Military and civilian dressed men with guns casually check us over and wave us on. Further down the highway, with even bigger guns, jeeps and heavy weaponry, they less casually check us over and wave us on. We are getting closer to the fighting.

### DIVIDE AND CONQUER

From a doorway in Comitán, Chiapas, I watch a convoy of military jeeps and tanks roll up cobble-stone streets. Middle-class, non-indigenous Mexicans stand watching, laughing, as the army, with a disproportionate percentage of poor Mayan men and boys swelling the foot-soldier ranks, goes to fight the Zapatista Army,



made up of Mayan men and women, fighting for the rights of Mayan peoples and the poor.

### LOTS OF WORK FOR THE RED CROSS

Late at night, three Red Cross workers pull into a Comitán diner for some tacos. They talk with us: "Don't quote us, because we are impartial", telling of an estimated 500 dead Zapatistas and 100 dead soldiers and that government planes and helicopters were indiscriminately bombing civilians targets, making lots of work for the Red Cross and human rights investigators.

### THE LAW OF THE CACIQUES

Amidst talk about liberty, freedom and democracy, millions of Mexicans are ruled by *Caciques*, large landowners in bed with the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) that has "democratically" been in power for 70 years straight. These power-holders make up the real laws that don't appear in the Mexican Constitution, laws that determine the lives of *campesinos*, like the one that says that violence and power govern. These *Caciques* are not so mysterious. They bankroll Mexican politicians; they make deals with "first" world financiers and traders.

### INSTIGATING "REVOLUTION"

The VW bug drives up into the mountains, towards the city of San Cristobal in the highlands. We are squeezed in the middle of a 30-40 vehicle Mexican army convoy: jeeps with mounted machine guns; trucks full of soldiers, of food, blankets and winter coats for the soldiers; tanks and artillery; all moving very slowly in a dense, pea-soup fog.

"Good time for a guerrilla ambush" says Pancho, my travelling companion, a Guatemalan photo-journalist who has covered Central America for the past 15 years. "If fighting breaks out, jump from the car, dive into the ditch and lie there."

Out of the fog, by the road, looms a massive 10 by 30 foot billboard. The Coca Cola advertisement reads, in Spanish: "Plastic! Returnable! Light! - IS REVOLUTION! We present MAXI 2 LITRES ..."

The government of Mexico has been blaming "Central American radicals and blond, blue-eyed foreigners" for being the instigators of the revolution. Will they now turn to Coca-Cola and blame them for the "Revolution"?

### MILITARY BLOCKADE #3

Our convoy moves slowly through a road-block: more soldiers, jeeps with mounted machine-guns, tanks and heavy artillery. Everything has stopped. We wait. Through the fog, two massive transport trucks are making their way out of the war zone, loaded top to bottom with Coca-Cola bottles.

### COLOURS

We drive on, in convoy, through mountainous Chiapas, towards San Cristobal, through thick fog. At a bend in the road, about 50 Mayan people are gathered around a band of musicians. All are dressed in the brightest red of their typical clothing, standing out in the grey fog, against the dark green of military vehicles rumbling by.

### TERRIFIED TOURISTS

On January 2, 1994, a group of tourists presented a petition to the Mexican Human Rights Commission (CNDH) demanding safe passage out of the war zone.

San Cristobal is a huge tourist attraction. Thousands of tourists come every year to marvel at the Mayan ruins, and barely notice the ruin of the Mayan people and culture. Some tourists haggle for bargain basement prices from the remaining Mayan peoples who slip early in the day into the public spaces near the \$70-100-a-night hotels and cappuccino cafes, to sell colorful *lipico* goods to the tourists.

Many tourists are descendants of the first Europeans invaders who came here 502 years ago; who set up patterns of domination and abuse that continue today.

Responding to a question from reporters as to whether the Zapatista army has had any contact from the Mexican authorities,

Commander Marcos: "The only thing we have heard was from the government Human Rights Commission concerning the well-being of some tourists."

### LA RUTA MAYA

San Cristobal is part of the *La Ruta Maya* "the Mayan Route" that covers southern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. *National Geographic* has written extensively about *La Ruta Maya*, though little content about the reality of millions of Mayan people, living in repression, discrimination and forced poverty along the road.

San Cristobal is surrounded by communities of indigenous peoples. They have names like the *Tzotziles*, *Tzeltzales*, *Cholos*, *Tajobales*, *Mames*. They don't own cafes, boutiques or much land, in this that once was their land. They provide "culture" which, if packaged right, is attractive to the tourists and anthropologists that come to study and visit the Mayans.

### THE PATHOLOGY OF POVERTY

In the San Cristobal central park, I sit sipping a coffee. An article in *La Jornada* newspaper reads: "Malnutrition and miserable work conditions are what most affect Indigenous children - they suffer from the pathology of poverty". Two Indigenous children approach - the girl sells purses, he sells gum. They wear worn out, non-Indigenous clothes; they wear malnutrition on their faces (patches of discolored skin). They can't read the paper open before me on the coffee table, talking about the pathology of poverty they live in.

### TO DIE WITH DIGNITY ... OR CHOLERA

After walking for 18 hours in the Lacandon Jungle, blind-folded, led by Zapatista army soldiers, three journalists finally get to ask Major Mario, of the EZLN, if they will lay down their weapons and negotiate with the Mexican government: "We are not going to lay down our weapons. We prefer to die fighting, with dignity, than to die of cholera, or than to be oppressed by the large land-owners death squads who treat us like pigs."

### "SHOESHINE, MISTER"

"Shoeshine, mister", the young Indigenous boy insists. "Hey mister, shoeshine - help me pay for my schooling".

"Aha", I say to myself, "this is not so, you won't use the money to go to school. You can't fool me", as I walk on, a wise world traveler, never to be tricked by the wily ways of a shoeshine boy. Rather, a patronizing and smug world traveler I, who never has had to live in the worn out shoes of a shoeshine boy, working the streets all his life just to survive; an Indigenous boy seeking the dirty shoes of Spanish descendant Mexicans and "first" world tourists, just to get by.

### CONTRASTING STRUGGLES

In Chiapas, I work with Mexicans trying to get international pressure to force the Mexican government to stop violating the Geneva laws of war (indiscriminately bombing civilians) in its fight against the Zapatista Army.

In *The News* newspaper I read of Barbra Streisand's "challenge". For giving two Las Vegas shows, on New Year's Eve, Barbra "earned" over \$12,000,000. At the end of her first show, *The News* reports, she cried out "I did it, I did it" - apparently it was the first time she had been able to overcome her stage-fright and sing in public, in 20 years.

### SOMETHING IN THOSE EYES

There is something so much more penetrating about an old beggar's eyes, than the mischievous and hopeful eyes of street children - beggars nonetheless. A misconception, of course; street children are walking the same paths the old beggar man has walked for 50 years. They'll catch up to where he is at, the sparkle long gone from their eyes.

### UNDERLYING CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Governments and intellectuals have tried to blame the Zapatista uprising on "professional terrorists", "outside agitators", "Central American leftist instigators", etc. For a day, the U.S. Embassy in



Mexico floated a rumor that they had found evidence of Cuban involvement in the Zapatista uprising.

In the "World Briefs" column of *The News* (March 2, 1994): "[In the Rio Grande do Sol region of Brazil] close to 15,000 people work in slave like conditions ... The Bishop of Vicarias, in Rio Grande do Sol, said that [in that region of Brazil] the number of slave laborers has gone from 597 in 1989 to 14,984 in 1994".

### "DO WHAT'S RIGHT", U.S. STYLE

President Clinton has stated that now is the time to "do what's right" in Vietnam. He talks about lifting the 29-year embargo and blockade!

To do what is right, the U.S. - that invaded and carried out an illegal and country-destroying war of aggression - will lift its illegal economic blockade of that same country!

Nothing will ever be done right to make amends for what the U.S. did in Vietnam. Not one of the over 2,000,000 Vietnamese killed appears on the Vietnam Wall in Washington.

### "WE NEVER SAY NO TO FOOD"

The Tzeltal Indians of the *Chalam de San Augustin* cooperative invite us to sit on handmade benches in their school with bamboo walls tied together with rope and a dirt floor. In their village, we are surrounded by dozens of huts with thatched roofs, no electricity, running water or sanitary systems. The sun and wind come through the walls of the school.

We offer to buy some snacks for the meeting. A man responds: *Cuando se trata de comida, nunca la despreciamos* (When it comes to food, we never say no).

They begin to tell us about historical poverty, that they still live in: "Back in 1810, our great, great, great grandparents were first brought here as *acacillados* (debt peonage) for the large land-owners..."

Two hours later, they conclude: "In reality things have not changed that much since then".

### TORTURE ... AND WORSE, IN MORELIA

In Morelia, we stand in the town square as residents tell us of January 6, when the Mexican Army took over their town. Soldiers searched all the houses, breaking in, stealing money and objects. They beat women and girls, captured all the men and boys and lay them face down on the village basketball court for 10 hours in the sun; hands tied their backs, kicking them regularly.

They took 20 or 30 of them into the church, tortured them, accusing them of being "Zapatistas". They took 20 of them away in helicopters to military bases, where they interrogated and tortured them again. Three townspeople are still missing, we are told.

One of the men who had been detained and tortured stands before us now, talking in a quavering voice, of what the army did: "... beat me regularly, stuck my head in water until I thought I'd drown, gave me electrical shocks on different parts of my body, starved us and didn't give us anything to drink, kept us tied up in the hot sun, kept us awake ...".

In late February (1994), the bodies of the three missing townspeople are found dead.

### WHO PARDONS WHO FOR WHAT

The government of Mexico offers amnesty to the Zapatistas: "Lay down your weapons, turn yourselves in, and your crimes will be pardoned."

The Zapatista Army responds:

"For what do we have to ask pardon? For what are they going to pardon us - for not dying of hunger? For not shutting up about our misery? For not having humbly accepted the gigantic historical burden of abandonment and discrimination? For having taken up weapons when all other avenues were closed off to us? Or for not having respected the Criminal Code of Chiapas, the most absurd and repressive law in living memory?"

**POORER THAN POOR**

In Morelia, many huts don't have electricity, drinking water or sanitary services. Townspeople tell us: "We are not so bad off. We are just a little poor. If you go into the mountain areas [they point all around us], there you will find people who are really poor". We shake our heads because the Morelia folks are poor and because they are right.

**EVIDENCE**

At the Ocosingo church we talk with the priest about the work the church in Chiapas and about the underlying causes of poverty and repression. When the talk ends, we drive out the church gate, through a crowd of 100 indigenous people lined up and waiting for survival supplies.

**A 500-YEAR-OLD UPRISING**

"We have always congratulated ourselves in Mexico on our extraordinary Indian culture which we display in museums and imposing monuments along our boulevards. ... In actual practice, however, we have treated the Indians with more cruelty, perhaps, than Cortez." (Carlos Fuentes)

**UNDERLYING CAUSES OF REVOLUTION - in Mexico**

The Mexican newspaper, *Excelsior*, reports (January 2, 1994) that tens of thousands of indigenous children under the age of ten work as exploited labor in the State of Sinaloa: "The workers emigrate from the impoverished zones of the States of Oaxaca and Chihuahua to work for 6 months in the harvesting of agricultural products for exportation, and then they return with their savings, which allow them to eat poorly the rest of the year", says Ardomen Ahumada Quintero.

In January, Mexican President Salinas went to Davos, Switzerland, and told an international conference of economists, and commercial and financial leaders, that the "problems in Mexico are isolated in four municipalities of Chiapas".

**"JUST AN INDIAN"**

We visit the Pantheon Cemetery in Ocosingo, to investigate a mass grave. A drunk Indian (Mayan-Tzeltal, I learn) comes swaying up to our group. He talks pure gibberish. We have a merry time talking gibberish, pretending we understand one another. We go on for five minutes, saying absolutely nothing.

Maureen comes back and tells us to walk around the side of the Cemetery to see the mass grave the Mexican Army dug, and denied digging, where they hastily buried, and denied burying, 11 bodies of civilians they had executed, and denied executing.

Our Tzeltal friend walks with us. Around the corner we see where the Army has blasted a hole in the cement wall. We duck through to find ourselves on the edge of a 3 X 5 meter grave where at least 11 bodies of innocent victims of this war were dumped.

I ask my drunk friend: "Who did this?" "Who was buried here?" Staring at the hole in the ground, he stops speaking gibberish. He is serious and still. "I don't know", he answers in Spanish.

Then he starts to talk, and, though he slurs, he tells a tale of 500 years: "I am just an Indian. I have nothing. I have no land. I have no work. You see this broom I carry with me (a bunch of dried brush, tied together by blades of grass), well, I sweep out peoples' yards, and they pay me 200 centavos (about 7 cents!). This is my source of income. We live in misery, and they treat us like shit."

That was the end of his story.

We walked from the mass grave, back through the hole in the wall. As we get in the van to go, our Mayan-Tzeltal friend asks us for 87 cents - *dos nuevos pesos* - "to go and by some more rum."

**WHICH LAWS TO FOLLOW**

Father Joel Padron Gonzalez is asked whether he supports the actions of the EZLN, who are breaking the law: "What law might it be that they are violating? The law is being violated when a person is abandoned in misery, when people die by oppression or poverty, when people have no access to adequate health services, when a person is not allowed to be a person. The law is being violated by they who are keeping so many people in



poverty and abandonment."

### MILITARY BLOCKADE #?

The bus rolls down the road from San Cristobal to Comitan. At the military roadblocks, the men and older boys are ordered out, hands against the side of the bus. Soldiers casually frisk the men and check the bags below. Then, we are on our way, joking about how the women in the bus had machine guns in their blouses, bombs under their dresses.

### "PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE WOLF'S MOUTH"

Alberto, a teacher, sits beside me on the bus to Comitan. He tells me about justice in Chiapas:

"A couple of years ago, on May 1st, international workers day, thousands of workers were marching peacefully. The son of a wealthy land-owner plowed his car into the demonstration and killed three workers in front of all those witnesses. Everyone knows this rich guy as Eugenio, 'el Terror'. His godfather was the former governor of Chiapas. So, he left San Cristobal for a while, and now he has come back, and he lives here fine, no problem, no trial, and no justice for the dead or their family members."

Alberto shakes his head when I ask him about the Zapatista Army: "They are the brave ones. I know a lot of people that agree with them, but we don't have the guts. But they are crazy", he concludes. "*Es como ponerte en la boca del lobo, sin nada*" (It is like putting yourself in the wolf's mouth, with nothing to protect yourself with).

### LIFE IN A HUT

I pass by huts everyday. I have stayed in huts. People who live in the huts have no money, no security, no electricity, no water, and no sanitary system. They have no where to go when it rains and the thatched roof leaks; no inheritance, no insurance (unemployment, old age, life, fire, etc.), nothing but themselves and (hopefully) their small plot of (likely) poor land.

### THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY

Across the highway, an Indigenous mother carries a baby. Barefoot, she walks with two other little girls, barefoot. They are bent under the weight of wood they carry on their backs. Mayan "beast of burdens", not mentioned or photographed in any *La Ruta Maya* tourist brochure.

### GUATEMALA

Driving regularly back into Guatemala from Chiapas, it always strikes me how the endemic exploitation, poverty, racism and repression are worse in Central America than even in southern Mexico.

### THE YOUNG EYES OF A BLIND MAN: AN ANECDOTE ABOUT 500 YEARS OF HISTORY

Back in Guatemala from Chiapas, waiting for a bus, I watch the border scene of black markets and dollar changers, the high surrounding mountains, the poverty, and the people getting by.

A little girl comes shuffling along, leading her father by the hand. He is blind. I suspect his blindness is due to some eye disorder - cataracts, perhaps - that could easily have been corrected long ago, and would have been, but he's Mayan and poor.

In his other hand, he carries a sack of what looks like corn. Perhaps they are going to the market, or home. Maybe four years old, the girl is his eyes.

They get to the back door of the bus. Once he feels where he is, he bends down and hoists her up into the doorway. Then, as he reaches up to climb in, she reaches back down to help guide him. I look in the back door and watch as they shuffle down the aisle to the first empty seats.

I sit stunned by the humanity and simplicity of the girl and her father, a chemistry of love and survival, amidst racism, poverty, international debt payments and IMF structural adjustment programs.

Half and hour down the road, into northern Guatemala, the

military – with machine-guns and grenades - flags our bus down. The soldiers order the men out, to be body searched, hands raised against the side of the bus. There are no jokes here in Guatemala, as there were in Mexico, about how the women and girls, left inside the bus, have guns and bombs under their dresses, and in their purses.

Anna, my travelling companion, stayed inside the bus as the soldier in charge, a tall *Jadino* man of Spanish descent, entered and all, to search the bags and look over the women and girls.

On our way again, Anna tells me that when the tall, mustached soldier got to the back of the bus, where the little girl and her blind father were sitting, he looked down at the girl, hanging on to her father's hand, and spat out at her:

"Why don't you clean your face before you come out in public?"

#### LETTER FROM A FRIEND IN HOLLAND

"I sometimes wonder how the hell I can live here in Holland peacefully while on the other side of the world, in countries where I have been, where friends of mine live, people are killing other people's hearts."

#### GUATEMALAN HEADLINES

"3 cadavers found by the River Mapa, Kilometer 273 of the Pacific Highway ... Signs of torture, hands tied, feet tied." (*Prensa Libre*, January 15, 1994)

#### WORLD RECORD DEATH SQUAD KILLING

In El Salvador, death squads killed four people, including a 13-year-old boy and Jose Reynaldo Campos who, at 106 years, must be the world's oldest death squad victim. Call the Guinness Book of Records. (*Prensa Libre*, January 17, 1994)

#### SHAKING IN MY FEDORA ON GUATEMALA CITY STREETS

At 11pm, I stride the dark Zone 1 streets. Across the street, two

cops corral a guy, scared, against the wall. By 15th Street and 2nd Avenue, a police car races up, squeals to a halt. Three cops jump out, two with machine guns pointing towards me. "Against the wall," one says. A body frisk. "No, nothing here. He isn't the guy." The three pile in and the car pulls away, leaving me shaking on the corner. It all took 20 seconds. I walk quickly home in my black fedora, feeling not tough at all.

#### THE GRASS IS GREENER ON THIS SIDE

I have troubles in life, I have problems, but they are nothing this morning, not even a speck of dust, compared to the life of the dirty, stumbling street kid I saw in the 15th Street Concordia Park, dancing a giddy jig to rap music scratching out of a radio, going nowhere, never, stoned on glue. I walk wary down these streets, wondering how we all get by.

#### YEARNING FOR A DREAMLIKE WORLD

Last night I dreamed of making a ski racing comeback. Awake, in Guatemala, far from snow covered mountains and the "white circus", I help document the process of people digging up the mass graves of their massacred loved ones.

Who does not yearn for that which is easy and beautiful?

#### A PREFERABLE INDIAN

"In the mind-set of the groups in power, a dead Indian is preferable to an educated Indian." (Byron Barrera Ortiz, *Prensa Libre*, Guatemala, January 30, 1994)

#### GOOD REASONS TO HIDE - in Guatemala

On my porch, I watch the sun rise, drink coffee and read the paper. The *Prensa Libre* reports: The wife and daughter of a journalist were found dead - both had been raped. The journalist has gone into hiding.



**IMAGINATIONS RUN AMOK (THE VICTIMS ARE ALL CRAZY)**

Sister Dianna Ortiz, from New Mexico, went to live in Guatemala. Her mission -- her "crime" -- was teaching literacy to the poor. In 1989, she was abducted, beaten and raped and tortured.

She was forced to watch other people being tortured. She was put in a pit with dead bodies, and live bodies, and rats. She was forced to torture another woman. This was done by the Guatemalan military, armed, trained and financed by the U.S. ... the "war on communism".

Dianna: "To this day, I can smell the decomposing of bodies, disposed of in an open pit. I can hear the piercing screams of other people being tortured. I can see the blood gushing out of the woman's body."

A U.S. official that the torturers called "Alejandro" was present during her ordeal. Finally, Alejandro ordered them to stop. Driving her away, he started to say: "It was a mistake ...". She jumped out of his vehicle at a stop-light and fled.

Five years later, a very long 5 years, Dianna is in Guatemala participating in a legal case to seek some measure of justice. As part of the proceedings, she had to go to the site of her detention and abuse, to re-enact the crime.

Before the eyes of officials and the ears of the press, Dianna ran from the building, fleeing memories of rape, torture, murder. Hearing suspended. Edith Vargas, Army spokesperson, suggested this proved that none of Dianna's claims are true: "Dianna might need psychiatric help," she said.

Presumably, according to Edith Vargas, there are hundreds of thousands of people in Guatemala whose loved ones were never killed, raped, tortured or massacred, whose villages were not destroyed, and who could use a lot of psychiatric help. (Book: *The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey From Torture To Truth*, by Dianna Ortiz, with Patricia Davis)

**A HAITIAN STORY**

"Even the morgue was not operational ... Lots of bodies, no refrigeration." (December 12, 1993, letter from Joanne Alkinson,

sent from Haiti)

**CUTTING EDGE JOURNALISM -- CONNECTING THE REAL DOTS (OF POWER)**

The *Miami Herald* business section (February 18, 1994) expresses surprise that Boeing and McDonnell Douglas finalized a \$6.2 billion contract with the government of Saudi Arabia to supply 50 commercial jets, speculating the deal might have something to do with Saudi Arabia's cooperation with the U.S. in the 1991 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

**NOT A HAITIAN "TRAGEDY"**

The *Miami Herald* (February 22, 1994) headline reads: "Another Haitian tragedy, dozens drown off Bahamas". "It was the most gruesome sight I have ever seen. There were so many little boys and girls all dressed up and the life was just gone from them", said Pastor Robinson Weatherford.

Where is the "tragedy" when people die fleeing a tiny country with a repressive government armed, trained, financed by the U.S.A. and France?

**"MARKETING" IN THE "INFORMAL" MARKET**

Gathered far from the woman sitting on the exhaust-enshrined sidewalk of 6th Avenue in zone 1, Guatemala City, her baby asleep in a cardboard box under her rickety table, academics and development experts discuss the "informal market", expounding on the 'human spirit at work in the market place'. For every passer-by, she reels off a sales pitch -- "marketing" -- offering to cover anything with plastic: birth certificates, lover's photos, driver's licenses, etc. After each person hurries on, few buying the service she sells for pennies, she hangs her weary head in the informal market called life.

**IT IS IN YOUR HANDS TO END HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS**

With a captured bird in their hands, a couple of kids wanted to test a blind sage. They sought her out to ask if the bird was dead

or alive. If she said alive, they would kill it; if she said dead, they would set it free. The sage said: "I don't know if it is dead or alive, but I do know that it is in your hands." (Anonymous)

### CONQUEST CONTINUES

A friend was visiting Panajachel, Guatemala, where tourists purchase Mayan culture, dine in vegetarian restaurants, and party and dance into the night by the great Lake Atitlan. As my friend sat there, "An older Mayan woman came by selling a carved crucifix. She arrived at a table where four men were talking in Italian. One of them leaned toward the woman and asked: *Putá?* (Are you a whore?) She didn't understand, and stood there smiling, showing the crucifix. *Putá?*, he said again and the men started to laugh. ... Then the look on her face ... you could see the pain in her eyes as she bowed her head and walked away." (Letter from Anne)

### MARKETING

POPs, a Guatemalan version of Ben and Jerry's, has found a way to advertise its product on giant bill-boards: A blond girl eating ice cream and drinking a milk shake.

### HUMAN WRONGS

How do you denounce the glue sniffed, now seen in the boy's glazed eyes as he stumbles through life?  
 How do you denounce the man's body, lying half off the curb, as cars rush by, and you don't know if he is dead?  
 How do you denounce a man leaning on a wheel-barrel piled high with bricks and bags of cement -- the traffic light changes and he strains every bone and muscle and walks forward, every day, earning barely 2 dollars to subsist?

### THE DEMOCRACY CHARADE - in Latin America

Alexander Watson, a U.S. official on Latin American affairs, comments on Nicaragua: "The U.S. government will accept the FSLN as a political force as long as they abide by the rules of the democratic game."

Watson does not mention and the media does not remind the reader of the fact that for ten years the U.S. trained, armed and financed the Contras who destroyed Nicaragua's democratic government, crushed the already tiny economy and killed tens of thousands of people. (*La Hora*, March 10, 1994)

### VARIOUS OBLIVIONS AND DECEPTIONS

In the "Jade" jewelry store, Hotel Camino Real, in the swank Zone 10 of Guatemala City, a glossy poster informs the prospective buyer of jade: "A brilliant and advanced Indian civilization came to an abrupt end in the jungles of Guatemala. In a startling short period of time - 80 years - the cities of the Classic Maya collapsed and their civilization passed into oblivion."

Across Guatemala today, Mayan people are digging up mass graves into which the bodies of their loved ones were dumped into oblivion in the 1980s and 1990s, in the name of "defending western civilization from communism".

### DREAMS OF LATIN AMERICA

In my dream, I was talking with someone, wondering which country in Latin America had the most dead souls: Colombia, Guatemala, Argentina, Haiti, Peru, El Salvador ... images of mass graves floated by.

### "SOPHISTICATION"

Human Rights Watch described Sub-commander Marcos of the Zapatista Army as "highly sophisticated". The report didn't describe the Indigenous people this way, who comprise the majority of the Zapatistas. (March 1, 1994)

### "EARNING" WEALTH AND POVERTY

"First Marathon Pay Packs a Wallop -- Top executive earns \$6.9 million in 1993". The top executive "earns" his salary in the investment business on a performance-related commission and bonus basis. Mike Walsh, First Marathon spokesperson: "These people are all-stars; they would be all-stars on anyone's team."



(*Globe and Mail*, April 13, 1994)

If top executives "earn" these amounts of money, 15,000,000 people, who die of hunger each year, "earn" it; 50% of the world's population "earn" \$2 a day.

#### "REMARKABLE" OCCASIONS - in Peru

*The Economist* (April 9, 1994) offers a "Once-in-a-lifetime-business-occasion" to attend a round table with the government of Peru, whose economic comeback "has been remarkable". No where, in the list of topics, does one find a panel discussion on Peru's remarkable system of State repression (disappearances, massacres, rape & torture) against the civilian population.

#### THE RELATIVITY OF "TERRORISM"

"Death Squads are an extremely effective tool in combating terrorism," commented Neil Livingstone, former assistant to Ollie North, the U.S. official who oversaw support for the U.S.-Contras and their war of terrorism in Nicaragua.

Neither Livingstone nor the *Washington Post* (March 28, 1994) mention that death squads are terrorists, that the hundreds of thousands of death squad victims in Latin America were not terrorists, but children, men and women, getting up every day, going to work and caring for their families.

#### "DISAPPEARANCES" IN PLAIN VIEW

I could sit by that old man on the curb and slowly disappear. On day one, I'd look out of place; day two as well; day three, less so. By day four, I would be of the street, smelling of urine and grime, hungry and quietly desperate, with the hardness of millions of Guatemalan street people. In the waves of noise and exhaust, I would disappear, sitting there for all not to see.

#### "HAITI IS LIKE SOMETHING STICKY YOU DON'T WANT ..."

"Haiti is like something sticky you don't want to have on your hands," comments a retired U.S. General. (*La Hora*, May 11, 1994)

A perfect sound-bite! Caption of the day!

Enough to make one forget that Haiti is full of human beings, like the General's wife, parents and children; enough to make one forget that successions of U.S. Generals have helped make Haiti the killing fields of repression and poverty that it long has been.

#### RIGHT TO HOUSING - in Guatemala

On 6th Avenue "A", a sheet of laminated metal covers the doorway of the abandoned building. The space between is a bathroom for people who don't have access to sanitary services, in homes they don't have. It reeks.

#### VACANT EYES IN MY HEART

10:30 pm: At the corner of 6th Av and 13th St, a woman sells pink and yellow furry-dog dolls, her child asleep under her rickety table. Who would buy such a thing, at this hour, here? Six police walk by carrying machine-guns. At 15th St and 6th Av, three armed police stand in front of the all-night "Girly Bar." Four doors on, I step over a dirty boy.

Days later, I walk with the memory of the drugged Mayan boy, flat-out on the sidewalk of this universe, clutching the filthy glue bottle to his lips and nose, staring endlessly.

#### A CENTURY BOUND IN STEEL BRACES

His body was profoundly deformed, from the shoulders I grasped to his legs and feet bound in steel braces. We helped him on the bus ... his mother and father so patient, carrying their son everywhere.

The father smiled tenderly when we offered our seats, seats so small that the boy with legs of steel did not fit. During the bus ride, he stood half slumped in his father's arms, tears streaming down their faces from the boy's pain and the father's.

The driver raced the bus towards Guatemala City, the family barely hanging on, so poor, so unattended to, so courageous, at this end of so brutal a century.

**FACTS AND FIGURES - in this globalization**

"We all know that there is a lot of money to win here, so as to buy a few more Christmas gifts," comments tennis player Pete Sampras before the Grand Slam Cup in Munich. The winner will earn millions of dollars.

**STRAIGHT TALK - in Guatemala**

The bony, wrinkled hand of the Mayan beggar shot out at the man walking by, who retorted loudly: "Why should I give you money, you are not nice!" Withdrawing her hand, she said: "Why should I lie?"

**FACTS AND FIGURES - in this globalization**

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* movie has a budget bigger than many countries' GNP.

**SANTA CLAUS - in this globalization**

As Christmas approaches, the media reports that Toys R Us, JC Penney, Fisher-Price, Gund and Hasbro pay slave wages to girls in sweat shops across the sea, to make dolls and toys these girls and their families will never afford.

**SWEAT IT OUT**

Down the dirt road to a forest trail, I run in December grey. Up and down, over rock and brush ... up and down, as life is, anger, frustrations and rage dissipating. In the forest I stop to catch my breath and bless the earth, air, water and life ... before running on, up and down.

**"[UN]KNOWN CAUSES"**

I dreamt of Jaime Bustamante, a Bolivian friend who died in a fire ("unknown causes", the media reported) in Costa Rica while involved in an environmental battle against a multi-national lumber company. Lynn Shoemaker's words about the "disappeared"

come to mind: "Somehow they must reappear." ♦

**"THE WOUND CHANNEL IS FANTASTIC"**

A new, armor piercing, flesh-shredding "hyper-destructive" handgun bullet is going on sale – the "Black Rhino". "Strictly defensive", explains Dave Keen, the designer and chief executive of Signature Products corporation (Alabama). "The beauty behind it is that it makes an incredible wound," he continues. The brochure explains: "Each of these fragments becomes lethal shrapnel and is hurled into vital organs, lungs, circulatory system components, the heart and other tissues. The wound channel is fantastic ... death is nearly instantaneous." (*Toronto Star*, December 28, 1994) ♦

**CANADA THE POOR**

A Canadian academic writes: "[Canada] may be poor, but we can still help our neighbor ..." (*Toronto Star*, January 4, 1995) This academic might have lots of university degrees, but is not smart. Canada is at the top of the global pyramid scheme, a content member of the exclusive G8, and living in the "Beverly Hills" or "Forest Hills" of the global order, coming up with pocket changes to help "less fortunate" neighbors.

**FACTS AND FIGURES - in this globalization**

"The assets of Mexico's richest individual total more than the combined annual income of the poorest 17,000,000." (*Globe and Mail*, January 6, 1995)

**"NO OTHER WAY" TO FIGHT FOR JUSTICE**

Jennifer Harbury is again in Guatemala. A U.S. lawyer who has worked for years on Guatemalan human rights and impunity issues, Jennifer is a bit scared and she has gone beyond fear. She hugs my one year old daughter Camila, the only person I know who can take Jennifer's mind off her work to clarify the case of her disappeared, tortured and executed husband, Efrain Bamaca.

In November 1994, Jennifer did a 30-day hunger strike in front of the Guatemalan National Palace as a way to pressure the



Guatemalan government to tell her what happened to Efrain. After the story finally broke in the main stream media (*People Magazine*, *60 Minutes*), she learned that the C.I.A. knew about and was involved in the illegal detention, torture and disappearance.

"So it looks like I will have to do another hunger strike, this time in front of the White House," she begins, over breakfast. "I will start on March 12th, the anniversary of the disappearance of Efrain ... There seems to be no other way."

She smiles, we talk. She hugs us all good-bye, especially Camila.

[Book: *Searching for Everardo: A Story of Love, War, and the CIA in Guatemala*, by Jennifer Harbury]

### PEOPLE I HAVE MET

All the issues I work on, many addressed in this book, deal with the sufferings of humans caused by other humans.

All the issues deal with normal and amazing people working, despite being victims themselves, despite poverty, repression and impunity, to right the wrongs, to remedy the injustices.

One of the many [extra] ordinary people I have worked with is Jesus Tecu Osorio. Eyewitness at the age of 10 to the massacre of 177 Mayan-Achi children and women from his community of Rio Negro, Jesus works forever for justice, for human rights and for the well-being of Guatemalans. Through my work with Rights Action, we continue to support projects and initiatives of Jesus.

### THE UNJUST DISTRIBUTION OF GRIEF

Jesus Tecu Osorio – a Mayan-Achi man and survivor of the genocide in the 1980s – sits in my office, curtains drawn. I sit writing at my computer as he tells his story. Every now and then, I ask him questions about the killing of more than 440 people, in four separate massacres committed against the people of his village of Rio Negro, including his entire family, except one sister.

On and on he talks, with precise and brutal detail, stopping

regularly to be silent, to cry.

He talks of things like: being forced to lie down on the ground, able to see as the soldiers and paramilitaries hacked and bludgeoned the women and children to death with machetes and rocks; raping girls and young women before killing them; tossing their bodies over the edge of a ravine; and more.

I get a headache that worsens as we proceed. In my office of blue walls and curtains and a faded blue rug, Jesus' eyes have the farthest away look I have seen, and in Central America I have met many people with faraway looks in their eyes.

After the soldiers and patrollers raped and murdered 177 women and children on March 13, 1982 (one of the four massacres), they spared the lives of 19 (now orphaned) children that they then enslaved for two years. Jesus was the oldest massacre survivor, and slave.

Today he has a perfect memory of what happened, a perfectly haunting memory.

After the killing stopped, high in the Rabinal Mountains, Jesus was standing with the other children, whose lives were "spared", holding his infant brother Jaime in his arms. A patroller named Pedro said: "It is too far for you to carry your brother; you will have to leave him here." Jesus insisted he could carry Jaime. Pedro grabbed Jaime, tied a rope around his neck and slung him over his shoulder. Pedro smashed Jaime against some rocks, and chucked him dead into the ravine with the rest.

Jesus was standing 10 meters away, watching, forever. In the blue room, he finally cries uncontrollably, he can't go on. My headache is splitting. He sobs: *Que lastima, Que lastima, Que lastima.* (What grief)

After a long, still while, we leave the blue room and walk. There are no words, and certainly no justice for his suffering, pain and loss. Grief, like wealth and other forms of privilege and power, is distributed unjustly.

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"When I was born, they put two tear-drops in my eyes so that I might see the enormity of the suffering of my people."

"Cuando naci, me pusieron dos lagrimas en los ojos para que pudiera ver el tamano del dolor de mi gente."  
(Humberto Ak'Abal, Guatemalan-Mayan poet and writer)

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### A SCREAM LOUDER THAN 100 FREIGHT TRAINS

The life and survival of Jesus Tecu Osorio is greater than anything the market, media and mainstream culture value and praise ... and so ordinary. The mere recounting of his tale could break steel rampsarts on the world's biggest bridge. The living of his life - the rape, torture, murder, and massacre of his community and universe - is a scream louder than the whistles of a 100 trains, darker than the darkest corner of night.

Yet, by telling his tale, he shines a piercing light on some great darkness, and he brings a part of the slaughtered and destroyed back to life. As he brings their memory back to life he shifts history and challenges the slaughterers and their accomplices who tried to erase these people, their names, communities and memories.

### JUST ACROSS THE TRACKS - anywhere in this globalization

Jesus Tecu Osorio is my friend and his reality is far, far from mine ... there, just across the tracks.

### ANECDOTES ABOUT A MASSACRE

Jesus Tecu Osorio remembers: The sandals of the civil defense patrollers from Xococ were filled with blood as they walked back and forth from where they were slaughtering the Rio Negro women and children to the edge of the ravine where they were chucking their bodies.

Jesus remembers: On the morning of March 13, 1982, in the village of Rio Negro, the soldiers and patrollers went from hut to hut forcing everyone out. At the home of Jesus' older sister (with whom he had been living since his parents were massacred one month before), they ordered the sister to serve them the porridge (*mosh*) she had prepared for the children. They ate it and then ordered every one out, slaughtered them later that day.

### "POW, POW, POW" IMPUNITY

Carlos, a journalist friend, told me about the death threat: "I was outside this church in the Old City of Guatemala, Zone 10, when a jeep with darkened windows drove up, looking for a place to park. The church attendant approached the wealthy young driver and told him he couldn't park in front of the Church. They argued.

"I was watching, off to one side. The priest came out and sided with the attendant. The man pulled a gun; the attendant jumped between the man and the priest; the man fired three times - pow, pow, pow - went back to his jeep, put the gun in the back, walked around to the driver's door, got in and drove away.

"I got his license plate number and our newspaper reported the crime to the police, and published an article about it the next day. Then the death threats began. We didn't do anything more. A friend of mine in the U.S. embassy -- they always know everything -- told me the owner of the vehicle was an army Colonel."

### CRYING YOURSELF TO DEATH

In the worst days of repression in El Salvador and Guatemala, a person could be killed or disappeared for crying.

The logic: If you mourn the death of a murdered or disappeared person, you knew them, and therefore are an enemy (communist, leftist, subversive) and therefore you're dead. Think, feel, suffer, OK, but don't cry. Tears = subversion = a death warrant.

Literally, you could cry yourself to death. After a while there would be no one left, even to mourn themselves to death.

### A PARTY IN GUATEMALA

On the balcony under the stars, Rolando, Hugo, Pablo, Vic and I sit with junk food, cigarettes and beer. Two-year old Camila careens around. We talk of delicious foods we have eaten, of how you define "massacre," that cigarette smoking is bad for your health, but so are massacres, of whether the testimonies we are collecting are sufficient or flawed with respect to their evidentiary value, of our poor dietary habits, of mental health, of "Do you



remember the time that ...?" An evening of whim, solidarity and laughter - Camila fell asleep long ago.

### THE GRAVEL MAKERS

Jonathan Treat and I drove to the south coast of Guatemala to interview survivors of the August 23rd massacre of four farmers. Along the highway, we pass a man and woman crushing boulders with a big sledge hammer and a small sledge hammer. We stop. They tell us part of their story.

From the nearby river a truck brings boulders two feet in diameter. They buy some. They take turns pounding with all their might on a boulder until finally it begins to crack. And on and on and on, breaking it down with the large hammer and then the small one - husband and wife taking turns with each hammer - until finally there is a small, conical pile of gravel for sale on the side of the highway.

Having fled the repression in the highlands, for over ten years they come 6 days a week to this rock-crushing lean-to, earning 80 quetzales (\$13) in a good week from sales.

### FACTS AND FIGURES - in this globalization

The U.S. spends four times more than any other nation on war.

### "DOW JONES WAR" - in Chiapas

Negotiations have broken off between the government and the Zapatista Mayan social movement in Chiapas. The Mexican Army is heading into Zapatista territory, a poverty stricken corner of Mexico, to attack poor and poorly armed indigenous fighters. The President of the opposition party calls it the "Dow Jones War": "President Zedillo (of Mexico) is obeying the orders of the boss Bill Clinton." The uprising of the poor is bad for business.

### "THIRD WORLD" TOURISM

In San Jose, Costa Rica, I sit in a bar of "gringos" on jaunts to "third" world beaches. A waitress lingers over the next table smiling at

the older man: "Oh, this is the biggest tip I ever got." The older man smiles. The younger man says: "If you ever want to come to the U.S. for dos semanas (two weeks)" - he holds two fingers in the air - "you can. I can ...". She laughs, and scurries off to attend to the next table. The older man: "She is beautiful." The younger man: "Don't you wish you could put it in her?"

### THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITIES

The international media is determined to identify Marcos, a masked leader of the Zapatista Revolutionary Army in Chiapas. Experts are interviewed; speculations tossed around. Reporters head to the Lacandon Jungle to inquire ... Few come to inquire into the identity of the Mayan children who die by the tens of thousands every year due to preventable diseases and other poverty related crimes.

### THE RELATIVITY OF SAFETY

Jesus Tecu Osorio is going to Washington to give his testimony to North Americans about the U.S.-backed genocide in Guatemala. Friends express concern for his safety: that he will become more widely known and therefore will become a target for repression. Eyewitness to and survivor of massacres (including that of his home village and family) and of slavery in Guatemala, Jesus listens to the concerns expressed and then ends the discussion: "People, who didn't suffer the violence (la violencia) like we did, always tell me these things. Yet, how can they do anything worse to me than they have already done?"

### REPRESSION IS ALWAYS CLOSE TO SOMEONE'S HOME

In the morning paper, we read that a woman has been disappeared. Vic and I freeze. This woman and her husband recently spent a fearful night in our apartment. Unionists working for labor rights, they were brought to us by a friend. Having received many threats, they were staying in "safe houses," while deciding what to do, whether to go into exile? She was released three days later, and they went into exile, no comments made about what her captors said or did to her.

## THOUSANDS DIE IN MEXICO, LAUGHING

Former Mexican President Salinas is under pressure due to allegations he was involved in corruption. For six years, Salinas was the darling of the Canadian and U.S. governments, business elites and media, all eager to conclude the NAFTA "free" trade deal that increased wealth and poverty, creating more billionaires and death by hunger and disease. Confronted with allegations of corruption, multi-millionaire Salinas announced that he is going on a hunger strike to "clear his name": "The most important thing I have is my life. That is why I am willing to give it up for the truth."

Thousands of poor Mexicans die, laughing, for a change.

## VICTORS WRITE HISTORY

Former U.S. President Bush traveled to Nicaragua to receive the country's highest award: the General Jose Dolores Estrada Order. Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro thanked him profusely for his support in the "new era of peace".

The circle is complete; lies have become truth. Reporters and political pundits ignore that Bush, as Vice-President and then President, oversaw the U.S.-Contra war that directly murdered over 30,000 Nicaraguans, many more dying of poverty as a result of the terrorist attacks on civilians and Nicaragua's economic infra-structure.

## ANECDOTES ABOUT THE PLAN DE SANCHEZ MASSACRE

Salvador, a survivor of the July 18, 1982, Plan de Sanchez massacre in Guatemala, comments about what the survivors found a day later: "Her arm must have been cut off by a machete, because there wasn't enough time for animals to have eaten it. Now, on the other hand, her face, it was gone too but it was eaten by the chanchos (wild pigs)."

Later, Salvador commented: "More than half the members of the community soccer team were killed in the massacre. Since then, we haven't been able to get a team together."

## A PARTY IN GUATEMALA

We gathered in the *Pie de Lana* bar to say good-bye to Jean and Annie ... and we talked about how our Guatemalan friends - the two Claudias and Miriam - were shot at and were receiving death threats for their human rights activism.

## KEEPING GUATEMALA CITY CLEAN

From my balcony, I watch the old street person in worn out clothes, putting on his shoes that are held together with rope. He gets up slowly from his sidewalk bed. He looks up and down the street, walks to the rain drain, and discreetly urinates.

## LABOR RIGHTS - in Guatemala

Newspaper headlines: "Body found of *maquila* union leader kidnapped Monday." The report: "At the bottom of a ravine, in Zone 18, 12th St and 26th Av, with his head in the putrid river of contaminated water, the body of the union leader Alexander Yovani Gomez Virula, 23, was found with torture signs all over ..." (*Prensa Libre*, March 20, 1995)

## THE CAT WOMAN

Hurrying off the bus at 18th St, Zone 1, Guatemala City, I glanced, registered, and hurried on amidst people and market stalls. For one instant, I had seen her standing in the exhaust, looking at the door of the bus, unsuccessfully selling soot covered clothes. A Mayan woman, she wore Cat Woman, librarian-like sun glasses, dirty, patched stretch pants, and a worn Indigenous sweater and apron.

## THE CHASM / THE FEVER

Regularly, I am struck by the chasm between experiences and understandings between people, both inside countries and particularly between countries, in the great global north-south divide, with respect to over-arching global realities of racism, repression, poverty and exploitation.



(Book: *The Fever*, by Wallace Shawn, 1991)

### IMAGINING FEAR AND SILENCE

Try and picture this: You live in a neighborhood with nice homes and green lawns; a second car parked in the driveway; kids playing along the street. Then: There is dissension in your city, province or state. There are disagreements amongst people about political issues, about how to do this or that in society.

One night, three people from your tree-lined street are kidnapped. You know them; they are (were?) nice neighbors. They were members of a neighborhood association that supported community sports, or theater, or building a park, or community something.

Then: The next day, a truck with no license plates and darkened windows, drives up and screeches to a halt. Four masked men dump their tortured bodies in front of a group of neighbors gathered in front of the home of one of the three disappeared (and now re-appeared) to talk about where they might be. The truck peels away.

Picture yourself and your neighbors, gathered around your three tortured, murdered friends, on that manicured lawn. Picture the frightened silence.

### GOOD AND SAD NEWS: REST IN PEACE EFRAIN BAMACA

Momentarily, I am elated. The news finally broke, in the compliant main stream media, that the C.I.A. was involved in the disappearance, torture and murder of Guatemalan rebel fighter Efrain Bamaca, Jennifer Harbury's husband.

In a world of atrocious crimes and lies, the simple telling of the truth, no matter how long after, is cause for a celebration. Jennifer, and others, had long been working to make it public that the C.I.A. was involved.

Then, the moment passed. I thought of Jennifer, now officially widowed, of how long she struggled and suffered, pressing forward to find the truth, riding a glimmer of hope. I realize that I too hoped, against all logic, that Efrain was alive so that one day

I might introduce him to our daughter Camila, a friend of his wife.

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"Our hearts go out in sympathy  
to all who are moved to violence  
by the suffering of others."

(Graham Greene, *The Comedians*, p.283)

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### RECONNECTING THE LIVING AND THE LIVING DEAD

In the mist and rain high above the town of Rabinal, I crouched in the make-shift chapel built by massacre survivors of the Plan de Sanchez community.

Months after the July 18, 1982 massacre of hundreds of women, men and children, the survivors came back to reclaim this spot, the very spot where the killing occurred; for 12 years they have come here to communicate with their murdered loved ones.

Father Roberto came hiking in from other isolated Mayan-Achi villages where he gives mass once every two months. He leads the Christian part of the mass, as local Mayan priests lead the Mayan ceremonies.

Candles burn amidst needles strewn over the dirt floor. Men strike marimba music. As the rain fell, surviving family members squatted in the music, incense and candle light. 12 years later, talking with their massacred loved ones.

### ROBERT McNAMARA'S MEMOIRS: CROCODILE TEARS ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK

Robert McNamara - former president of Ford Motor Company, former president of the World Bank, former U.S. Minister of Defense under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, and a principle architect of the U.S. invasion of Vietnam - admitted (in his book, *In Retrospect*) that "Vietnam" was wrong in just about every way you can think of: there was no communist threat; the "domino theory" was wrong; the U.S. should have pulled out.

What meaning does this have to 3,000,000 Vietnamese victims? To 58,000 U.S. soldiers' names engraved on the Vietnam Wall?

What does this mean, to hundreds of thousands of Central Americans killed, with huge amounts of U.S. aid, weaponry, training and political support, in the name of stopping the spread of communism and ending the fall of dominos in Central America? Book sales go well for McNamara, author.

### MASS GRAVES FULL OF TEARS

I struggle with a report I am writing about the exhumations of mass graves in Guatemala. I can sort of hear the terrified cries of massacre victims; I ignore them and plow on. Will another massacre occur before I am finished? Much of what remains from the massacres are tears, except that after the 1980s massacres, surviving family and community members couldn't even mourn their dead, for fear they would be next.

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"The tears of the people are marvelous, showing that they are alive and recovering.

Similarly, when the witnesses re-tell their stories and cry again, they again open their enlightening wounds."

*"Las llagas del pueblo son maravillosas, porque las muestra estando vivo y resucitado.*

*Así también, los testigos al relatar su historia y volver a llorar, abren de nuevo su herida luminosa."*

*(Masacres de la Selva, by Ricardo Falla)*

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### THE EXHUMATION PROCESS

It is difficult to estimate the total number of mass grave sites throughout Guatemala. Since 1992, 100s of mass graves have been exhumed by forensic anthropologists from Guatemala.

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"The earth has hidden horrible truths about an infinite number of massacred Guatemalans.

Now the earth begins to speak".

*(Miguel Angel Albizu, Siglo XXI, May 18, 1994)*

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Though every exhumation differs, each is part of a

country-wide process of painstakingly uncovering the atrocities of the past. The numbers of bodies (mostly partial

or full skeletal remains, some with shreds of clothing and shoes) recovered from each mass grave vary from three or four cadavers to hundreds.

Taking a break from exhuming a mass grave at the Plan de Sanchez massacre site, where an estimated 250 persons were killed on July 18, 1982, a member of the FAFG (Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala) commented: "Plan de Sanchez was not the biggest, nor the worst, nor the most tragic massacre in Guatemala. It was one more within a pattern, within the military counter-insurgency strategy of scorched earth."

The exhumation process is at once simple and profound: A peoples' attempt to recover (and, in a sense, repair) their personal, family and community history, to publicly tell the truth about the past, and to strive for some measure of justice.

Though not the only effort in Guatemala to expose the crimes and suffering of the past, the exhumations – spearheaded by the surviving victims themselves – provide the most graphic and blunt exposure of the crimes of the past.

Though nothing will change the horrors of the past, or completely end the pain of so many families, the surviving victims proceed with the exhumations. Providing an initial response to a family and community's loss, trauma and suffering, the exhumations also make a political statement. After the 'dig' and ensuing forensic laboratory work has been completed, the surviving victims rebury their murdered loved ones with religious and public ceremonies for all to see, including the individuals and institutions that committed the massacres.

Commemorative monuments are erected, including the names of the dead and the names of the guilty; it is a crucial element to the recovery of the surviving victims that they publicly remember the names and lives of the dead. In this process, community and family members



find a degree of personal closure along with political empowerment.

### THE DARK AGES

"We are not animals or beings from another planet such that you can just kill us by hunger. We are entering the 21st century and we still have to eat grass to survive. ... Sometimes the Guatemalan Army poisoned our food ... and when they did someone had to check it to find out." (Andres Sebastian, from the Communities of Populations in Resistance, *La Republica*, April 24, 1995)

### MUNDO MAYA CROSS COUNTRY RALLY

In Santa Cruz, Quiche, Rosario Pu talks of the monument she wants to construct to commemorate her parents. They are buried where they were slaughtered by the Army, outside the back door of their rural hut: "No one has used their home since because they lie there, improperly buried."

The Guatemalan newspapers reports on the "El Camel Trophy" (Camel cigarettes) that will be won by the winner of the *Mundo Maya 95* cross country rally. Drivers will come from around the world, and bump their company-sponsored jeeps around Mayan ruins. (*Siglo XXI*, April 26, 1995)

Rosario Pu is Mayan and much of her family was ruined.

### STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE - in the Americas

In Argentina, Federico Talavera publicly states what has long been known. He was a soldier in the Argentinean military when they were "fighting communism" in the 70s and 80s. In torture sessions he watched as dogs bit prisoners' genitals.

He explains how they forced a nine-month pregnant woman and other "disappeared" prisoners to take their clothes off. They were drugged, flown over the Atlantic Ocean and thrown to waiting sharks.

### "SAFETY" - in Guatemala

"With very little, you can save so much," the advertisement informs. For 2,095 quetzales (\$350) you can buy a *Maverick Escopeta* (a sawed-off 12 gage shot-gun). For another 200 quetzales, they will throw in a *Stun-Gun - paralizador electrico* - "for your safety and that of your business." (*Prensa Libre*, May 2, 1995)

### A STANDING OVATION FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM

President Clinton tells a Michigan State University audience: "Whenever, in our country history, people have believed that violence is a legitimate extension of politics, they have been wrong." He received a standing ovation.

### WHAT HUMAN RIGHTS WORK IS ABOUT

My happy and healthy 94-year-old grandmother told me: "I can't remember too much anymore, but I do know how to knit."

### THE OTHER GUATEMALA

At the U.S. border, I tell officials: 'I am going to Guatemala to study Spanish and see the Mayan ruins.' I do not say that I go to visit mass graves, and write about massacres, exhumations and the complicit role of the U.S. during the so-called Cold War.

### THE AMERICAN DREAM

A U.S. Senator rails against Hollywood for marketing violence and senseless killing. By a 3:1 ratio, the U.S. is the world's leader in international weapons production and sales.

### "SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL" ON FATHER'S DAY - in Guatemala

*Para Papa, algo muy especial* (For Dad, something very special), entices the advertisement, selling the *Jericho 941* hand-gun. (*Prensa Libre*, June 8, 1995)

## ROPA AMERICANA ON LA RUTA MAYA: CONQUEST CONTINUES

"We are so poor we have to buy *ropa Americana*," the campesino told me.

Ship containers of used clothes are imported by weight from the U.S. and Canada, and sold for low prices across Guatemala. *Ropa Americana* stores dot the country of *La Ruta Maya*, where the Mayan people can't afford their own clothing.

Most *ropa Americana* was made here – and across Central America – by under aged girls, working for miserable wages in the *maquiladora* sweat shops, then exported to North America and sold by the major clothing chains for high prices ... before being left in 'Used Clothing' bins, and shipped back to Central America, to be sold cheap to the poor.

## A HARD AND BEAUTIFUL BOOK: "MASSACRES OF THE JUNGLE"

In the green and hot Ixcán jungle, northern Guatemala, I walk a muddy trail from the Rio Negro river to the community of San Juan de Chactela. Community members listen to us talk about human rights. The men wear second-hand t-shirts bought at *ropa Americana* huts: "Crazy Girls Club," "Chicago Bulls".

Jesuit priest Ricardo Falla wrote a book about the Ixcán region: *Masacres de la Selva* (Massacres of the Jungle). For 13 years, few have come here to talk about human rights, ever since the Army swept through the green heat, searching and destroying.

In San Juan Chactela, Miguel, from Spain, gives the MINUGUA (United Nations Human Rights Observer Mission in Guatemala) rap: "If you wish to make a denunciation concerning a human rights violation, come to the Cantabal office, and we will receive it there." "Oh," says one man, "that is 20 kilometers north -- that would take the whole day to walk."

That afternoon, going back down the Rio Negro river in a dug-out canoe, I am stuck: there is so much wrong here. I have seen those eyes before, of poor, repressed people who listen to talk of human rights and justice. I am bit player in a big game, earning a million times more in one month than they earn in one year. They subsist by the great Rio Negro river, caught in a violent reality they have little control over.

That evening at Jono's Bar, on the main mud street of Cantabal, Ixcán, I enjoy a beer and a Graham Greene novel of global power, manipulation and greed. A drunk ambles by and threatens a yellow truck that is backing up. The truck inches the drunk back; the drunk threatens it fiercely. The driver laughs, and spins away, leaving the drunk triumphant and tottering.

Later, I lean out my window. A few candles flicker through the town – electricity gone until tomorrow. Seems to make little difference whether one is an environmentalist, a multi-national oil company man, a death squad member, a run-of-the-mill imperialist from the global north, or a human rights activist; we create work for one another. From across the way, clapping and singing come from the evangelical Baptist church.

## REMINDING THE POOR THEY ARE POOR

American Airlines ad: "Parents with money go to heaven." (*Prensa Libre*, June 12, 1995)

## REASONS TO GO HOME, OR NOT - in Guatemala

A page one article about the Ixcán region: poverty, war loss and dislocation, neglect.

On another page, an ad: "Jacuzzi Dimension One spas: Some people have a good reason to go home." (*Prensa Libre*, June 12, 1995)

## "LIBERTY" - in El Salvador and the USA

Alfredo Cristiani, former President of El Salvador, has received the "Liberty Prize" awarded by the Republican International Institute. Former leader of the ARENA party, that operated U.S. supported death squads during the 1970s, 80s and 90s, Cristiani thanks the U.S. Congress. (*La Prensa Libre*, June 12, 1995)

With liberty like this, who needs terrorism?



**INTERNATIONAL MAKE WORK PROJECT**

Northern nations build tanks, bombs and bullets,  
sell them around the planet,  
train soldiers and death squads to use them,  
contribute to the political conflicts that end up in violence,  
and then pay human rights workers to come and report on the  
human right violations.

**AN AMERICAN DREAM**

"As the leader of the free world our nation has long had to face the  
problem of how to deal with rogue nations." (Indiana Republican  
Congressperson, *Miami Herald*, June 12, 1995)

**REDUNDANCY**

The poor might get desperate.

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"Poverty is a life of quiet desperation."  
(Thoreau)  
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**A GUATEMALAN DREAM**

In the hot Cantabal night (Ixcan region, Guatemala), I stumble  
from bed. I'd been dreaming of the Ixcan in the early 1980s — of  
*Masacres de la Selva*, the book by Ricardo Falla. I couldn't get  
away from the screams of the victims until I woke and locked my  
filmy door.

**"200 METERS"**

There are complications with the return of the San Antonio Tzeja  
townspeople from their Mexican exile. In 1982, they fled the Ixcan  
massacres in northern Guatemala. Now, hundreds are stuck in  
squalor in a Cantabal church, waiting for ... as they have waited  
for 13 years. They decide to walk home themselves.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees -UNHCR-  
decides they cannot support the refugee's rightful decision to go  
home, as there is a potential conflict with military-backed people  
living on their land. The UNHCR decides that if the San Antonio  
returnees march home on their own, two UNHCR officials may  
walk 200 meters behind, observing but not condoning the return.  
Who came up with the "200 meters" distance ... of muddy, rocky  
jungle trail?

**THE NEVER ENDING - REFLECTIONS OF A ZEALOT**

In 1992, I submitted to a Canadian magazine a copy of  
*The Never Ending*, a small book similar to this one, inquiring  
whether they would publish excerpts.

*The Never Ending* covers two years (August 1989-July 1991)  
of work that I did with CODEHUCA, the Commission for the  
Defense of Human Rights in Central America. This work  
took me travelling regularly through Panama, Nicaragua,  
Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, working on a wide  
range of human rights issues, including:

- the aftermath of the illegal and brutal U.S. "Operation  
Just Cause" invasion (December 19, 1989) of Panama
- the November 1989 massacre of 6 Jesuit priests in El  
Salvador
- the end of and then return of the U.S.-Contra terrorist  
war in Nicaragua
- the on-going systemic repression in Honduras and  
Guatemala; and
- the systematic violation of economic, social and  
cultural rights (e.g. poverty and misery) throughout  
the region.

I received a letter back informing me the book was "not  
quite right for" them. A handwritten note from the editor  
said my writing "[hovers] on the periphery of zealotry, so the  
polemic and preaching overshadow [the writing]".

\*\*\*  
"If they attack Iraq, Bush and Blair will be war criminals.  
We are the moderates. They are the extremists.  
Our resistance to their murderous plans must be  
unrelenting."

(John Pilger, anti-war protest, London, September 28, 2002)

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After working many years on issues of global injustice, inequality, human rights violations and environmental destruction, I think the zealots, in the North American context, might well be those mainstream politicians, experts, journalists, pundits and assorted teachers who continue to turn a blind eye, at almost every turn, to how the west (Europe and North America) have long contributed to and benefitted from global exploitation, racism, imperialism, wars of aggression and repression.

Certainly, European and North American policies and actions are not the only cause of exploitation and poverty, suffering and death in places like Central America and southern Mexico. But Europe, Canada and most particularly the United States have long contributed to and benefitted from exploitation and poverty, suffering and death in Central America and southern Mexico.

This book, like *The Never Ending*, aims to shine a small light at these situations of injustice and to show how North America often contributes to and benefits from this global dynamic.



## 1996-1997: "The Price Is Worth It"

### UNITED STATES

After living 6 years in Central America (the last two in Guatemala), I moved with my family in late 1995 to Washington DC, to become the director of Rights Action. Here, I continued with the same work I have been doing since the mid-1980s, but now based in North America.

Coming north – and particularly to Washington DC -, I was again confronted daily with the chasms that separate the north and the south – the chasms of unequal power and wealth distribution, the chasms of misunderstandings resulting often from media and historical deceptions and manipulations.

### 99% SURE IS NOT SURE ENOUGH

#### AN UTTER NEED TO DIG UP MASS GRAVES – in Guatemala

Standing in jungle heat in the village of El Chal, Peten, I watch as bones and remains of massacre victims are exhumed from muddy pits. Slowly, it sinks in: I am standing, even joking, with people around a pit, watching crimes against humanity unearthed, violating one's deepest sense of how things ought to be.

It should not be that soldiers broke into the home of Gloria, a *campesina* woman of 50. She worked too hard all her life, to earn next to nothing, to create a home for her children.

It should not be that soldiers grabbed Tomas, her son, from before



her eyes and she never saw him again. She learned that for six days Tomas was illegally detained in a military base and tortured, before he was executed and his body dumped ... somewhere ... but where? Since then, she has raised Tomas' child, her grandson.

Today, Gloria stands across the pit, still poor. Members of the Guatemala Forensic Anthropology Team gingerly scrape dirt away from the skeletal remains of four intertwined bodies, rope still tying what were arms and legs. Perhaps one is Tomas.

Gloria hopes to confirm what she knows. She needs to be 100% certain, not 99%, that he is long dead, out of pain and suffering, so that she will finally be able to give him a proper burial.

No justice will be done.

#### "THE PRICE IS WORTH IT"

Interviewed on CBS's "60 Minutes" news program about the death of 500,000 Iraqi children due to the U.S. and British enforced U.N. sanctions, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said: "We think the price is worth it."

What if just one of the 500,000 dead children were hers?

#### THINGS THE MEDIA NEGLECTS TO TELL US

Robert Gelbard, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, says: "As a matter of policy, we oppose the concept of paramilitary groups and we would take any and all measures to oppose assistance to them." (*New York Times*, November 26, 1996)

This is false. Why did the *New York Times* miss it?

In U.S. operated military schools, like the School of the Americas, and in-the-field, The U.S. has armed, trained, financed and fought with paramilitary groups and "death squads" in dozens of wars and conflicts across the globe (including Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, where I have lived and worked) and they continue to do so.

#### MEDIA

Living in North America, I was confronted daily with the often times harmful and complicit role the mainstream media plays in distorting and misrepresenting issues.

My understanding: Much of the North American media does their job more or less correctly with respect to investigating and reporting on a wide range of domestic issues, and that when reporting on global issues, most of the main stream media will parrot, in varying degrees, the positions of the U.S. and Canadian governments.

This is a serious obstacle to bringing about economic, political and military changes and reforms we need in the U.S. and Canada.

#### A GENOCIDE SURVIVOR SPEAKS IN BOSTON OF "THE BLOOD AND TEARS"

In the wealthiest hotel in Boston, the Reebok Company hosts its annual Human Rights Award ceremonies. I have come with Jesus Tecu Osorio, a Mayan-Achi genocide survivor from Guatemala who is a recipient this year. Reebok spends no money to treat itself well; there are limousines abound.

Before a packed audience, with Michael Stipes and Peter Gabriel sitting on the stage, Jesus gives thanks for the award, saying the \$25,000 prize "is the blood and tears of the massacre victims in Rabinal, Guatemala."

At this human rights gathering, there is no mention of the U.S. support for Guatemala's genocide and the "blood and tears", no mention of Reebok sweat shops in exploited countries of the global south.

#### GLOBAL POWER AND LOGIC: OIL, MONEY AND GUNS

The British Petroleum Exploration company has discovered oil near Yopal, Colombia. So, BPE pays \$60 million for a battalion of 150 Colombian officers and 500 soldiers to protect the "investment".

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"The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist –

McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15.

And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies

is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."

(Thomas Friedman, *New York Times Magazine*, March 1999)

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### GLOBAL POWER AND LOGIC: "THE RUBBISH PEOPLE"

"There are no plans for the millions of marginalized [people] who are simply in the way, useless to both production and consumption. As one said, when he and his family were forcibly removed from their home by a World Bank project, "We are the rubbish people." (Susan George, *Third World Resurgence* #28, p.19)

### GLOBAL POWER AND LOGIC: BLACK AND WHITE

The U.S. State Department warns the South African government of Nelson Mandela not to sell to Syria (a "rogue and tyrant state") weapons parts that were purchased by the South African government, the Apartheid one, from its former allies (U.S., Canada, European nations, Israel) to oppress its own black people and attack liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique trying to liberate themselves from European colonialism.

### ONE AT A TIME - OVER 250,000 GUATEMALANS KILLED

It is not only that over 250,000 mainly Mayan Guatemalans were killed or disappeared by the U.S. and western-backed military regimes, during the so-called "Cold War", but that one person was killed or disappeared at a time.

### THREE PEOPLE – in Guatemala

At the corner of 5th Avenue and 6th Street, in Zone 1, Guatemala City, I walk by three people: the mother lies on the dirty sidewalk, her newborn curled inside her curved body, drinking breast-milk. The mother's head is covered – not to see or be seen; a boy squats nearby, holding out a dirty plastic bowl for money.

### JOB SATISFACTION

I hate my job – and writing about it. But much more, I hate the injustices and inequalities of our global order, our humanity.

### FRIENDS ... DUE TO REPRESSION AND GENOCIDE

Many of the amazing people we work with and support in Central America have become my friends. But for the massacres, genocide and exploitation imposed on them in part by my part of the world, I never would have met them.

### FUNDAMENTAL CONUNDRUM

Rich and powerful countries, institutions and people of the planet have little political-cultural-ideological-economic desire to co-exist on this planet in an equal and mutually beneficial way with all peoples, animal life and the environment.

### HIS-STORY

In at least 15 Latin American countries, rapists can have charges dropped if they marry the victim. Jaime Baquero, a taxi driver, agrees with the law: "A raped woman is a used item. No one wants her. At least with this law, the woman will get a husband." (*New York Times*, March 12, 1997) Do co-defendants in a gang rape trial quarrel amongst themselves to marry their victim?

### PAYING THE ABUSER: CASE STUDY VIETNAM

The Vietnamese government has just repaid to the U.S. government \$140 million in loans that the U.S. government made



to the repressive South Vietnamese regime in the 1960s that the U.S. government was propping up in its illegal and brutal war of aggression against Vietnam. (*New York Times*, March 11, 1997)

#### THOUGHTS ABOUT GENOCIDE, IN DULLES AIRPORT

Many times I have waited in the Dulles Airport (Washington DC) for Guatemalans coming to the U.S. to give talks about human rights violations and the genocide in Guatemala, the causal roots of which go back to when the Dulles brothers (Allen and John Foster, heads of the C.I.A. and State Department) conspired in 1954 to overthrow the only democratic government Guatemala ever had and put in place the oligarchy-military regimes of ever since.

#### "AT THE BOTTOM OF A WELL": CONQUEST CONTINUES

"...[I]t is like living at the bottom of a well," said Milo Yellow Hair, explaining: "a six-pack costs less than a gallon of milk." Mothers put soda in their babies' bottles and shake it up to get the fizz out. [Diabetes] starts there ... That's really frightening - they are already insulin resistant." (*New York Times*, June 11, 1997)

Pine Ridge, South Dakota, is home to the Oglala Sioux people and site of the Wounded Knee massacre, when the U.S. Army killed 200 women, children and men.

#### EQUALITY MYTHS WE LIVE BY

According to international law, all nations are equal. According to the constitutional law of most countries, all people are equal.

#### PROFITABLE LIES ABOUT BULLETS, BOMBS AND DEMOCRACY

President Clinton's government promotes the sale of guns and fighter jets to Latin American governments: "Selling weapons would help stabilize the region and bolster the transition to democracy." (*New York Times*, August 2, 1997)

See p. 57

#### "TRAIL OF TEARS" ETHNIC CLEANSING

In Nashville, Tennessee, Apache and Cherokee people fight to preserve a burial site that dates back to the Mississippian period, around year 1100. Toye Heape: "Wal-Mart is playing with something the Creator of all of us doesn't want them to get into. We are still dealing with the Trail of Tears." In the 1830s, President Andrew Jackson carried out an ethnic cleansing, forcibly evicting "Indians" from their home lands. "Once again, the rich and powerful are trying to get us out of the way so that they can exploit the land," concludes Toye. (*New York Times*, August 3, 1997)

#### POWER AND RACISM MEAN NEVER HAVING TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY ABOUT THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS IN CANADA

The *Globe and Mail* (August 7, 1997) reports on a debate between the United Church of Canada and the Canadian government as to who holds more responsibility for the sexual abuse and other harms committed against Indigenous peoples in what is now known as "Canada".

Tens of thousands of Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their families and communities; they were sent far away to receive an "education"; they had their hair cut, were told to speak only English or French; were "integrated" into English/French Canada, and told to pray to Anglo/French Gods in government funded residential schools run by Christian churches.

Some children died at the schools under abusive and suspicious circumstances.

Ginette Thomas, spokeswoman for the Ministry of Indian Affairs: "The government's focus is on healing and positive action to help communities and individuals. It is not focusing on apologizing."

#### OSTENTATIOUS MYTHS WE LIVE BY

The media reports on Bill Gate's \$60 million home near Seattle. "I wanted ... nothing ostentatious," Gates says. (*Washington Post*, August 28, 1997)

### "LADY DI" AND MASSACRES

Mar. Garcia said: "Look, she (Lady Diana) wanted us to take these photographs. And everyone wanted them. ... Magazines know a photo of Diana sold better than one of Algerian massacres." (*New York Times*, September 6, 1997)

### THE "STUPEFACTION" FACTOR

Francois Apesteguy, celebrity paparazzi: "I was feeling bothered and I was not sure why. I asked myself 'Why do you do what you do?' Then I realized I participated in the stupefaction of the public. It is we who drug the public. If there were no drug dealers there would be no addicts." (*Washington Post*, September 4, 1997)

### POVERTY TOURISM

"Calcutta is the city where tourists come to look at world-class poverty. They gawk at it through the windows of air-conditioned buses that shut out the stench of neighborhoods." (*New York Times*, September 12, 1997)

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In 1995, I spent a few weeks in the Dominican Republic with Scott Leckie investigating the systemic violations of economic and social rights (e.g. poverty) of the majority population. A new country to visit and work in; same stories and structures of racism, inequality and injustice.

### CONVERSATION WITH A FORMER C.I.A. AGENT

I told Harry (September 14, 1997) we would have to put off dinner until October: "Oh, are you off somewhere?" he asked. "Yes, to the Dominican Republic (DR) to do an investigation into poverty, economic and social rights."

"Well," Harry said with a rueful smile, "I've been to the DR twice;

back in '65, with you-know-who." I did know who – the C.I.A. (Central Intelligence Agency). "And in '85, on my own, to see what it was like."

"I went in May of 1965 for one month – you know when." I did. The U.S. invaded the country, overthrew a democratic government, and installed a pro-business repressive regime. Thousands were killed.

Harry: "I was at home, when I got called. We were flown to the San Isidrio airport. From there, we were helicoptered to the U.S. embassy, flying over shooting and the like. I was in charge of preparing hourly reports for the White House. But I got out of there – I didn't have a clue as to what was going on – it was a circus. ... When I went back in '85, it was a dump, a mess of poverty" ... the logical result of so many U.S. invasions and interventions.

### THE CHASM BETWEEN ...

Sitting in a Santo Domingo hotel, after a day investigating poverty and systemic violations of human rights in the slums around Santo Domingo, far from the tourist complexes, I feel the chasm between us and them, the rich and poor.

Scott said that when some friends read *The Never Ending* (an earlier, shorter version of this book), they found it to be a self-serving, dealing-with-my-guilt book written by a well-to-do gringo in Central America.

They are partially right. I have felt guilty; I do sometimes today. It is a complex feeling in a complex, interconnected world where our military coups and financial support for oligarchies are linked to their repression and poverty; where our profitable mining companies and hydro-electric projects are linked to their forced displacement and the killing of Indigenous peoples; where our massive consumption uses their best lands, for export only, even as there is starvation in their countries.

### "BE KIND TO THE TOURIST"

The Dominican Republic is a good place to visit if a tourist wants cheap holidays, beaches, sun, drinks and who-knows-what. Ministry of Tourism bill-boards exhort the population: "Be kind to



the tourist ... [who] is our friend."

The Dominican Republic is a bad place to live if you are of the majority impoverished population who want a decent life for your children, grand-parents and community.

### CHICHI REMEMBERS FIGHTING "THE TRIUMVERATE"

In a small home, on a dusty street in Santo Domingo, we sit by candle light as Chichi talks of what happened in the 1960s when the U.S. invaded ... "fighting communism". Chichi was ten years old when the "Constitutionalists" fought "the Triumvirate" (oligarchy and Army - Catholic Church - U.S.A.). Chichi's family supported the Constitutionalists fighting to restore the ousted democratic government.

From the ravines of the Simon Bolivar neighborhood, in the Zona Norte of Santo Domingo, Chichi, a shoe-shine boy, would carry food and sometimes grenades and hand-guns to where the Constitutionalists were based.

In the dense ravines of his youth, Chichi remembers the *cangrejos* (crabs), as he played by the Ozama and Isabella rivers, then clean, now two of the world's most polluted rivers. U.S. Navy boats patrolled the Ozama River. The U.S. Air Force flew overhead, bombing the Zona Norte.

Chichi remembers: The crabs would scramble under the rocks as the planes dropped bombs.

### ONE WORLD - ONE CHASM

Flying home after human rights investigations in the Dominican Republic, the fellow in front reads an in-flight magazine article: "Have it all, get rich."

### WITH "PEACE" LIKE THIS, WHO NEEDS WAR

In the Washington DC airport, a 6 by 6 foot advertisement (Lockheed-Martin, Boeing, and Pratt and Whitney) asks: "What does it take to prevent a war? The same strength it takes to win one. The revolutionary F-22 will give America uncompromised air

dominance. And it will give potential adversaries a single option: peace."

In the photo: "The anti-war plane" written on the back of a sleek, black, lethal F-22.

### "EXTRA-DEATH TOLL": THE TERRIBLE THINGS WE HAVE TO DO TO THEM, FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

"The consequences of the [international economic sanctions in Iraq] include an annual extra-death toll of perhaps a million people, 60% of them children, and the still unrepaired desolation of the public health infrastructure bombed in the war." (*Washington Post* editorial, October 22, 1997)



## 1998: "Extra Death Toll"

### CODE Z59.5 – EXTREME POVERTY KILLS

Many decry, over and over, the "problem of poverty". Rich countries, global leaders and institutions (United Nations, World Bank, IMF, etc.) call for the "reduction of poverty" or the "alleviation of poverty" by such'n'such a date.

But do the impoverished live in a separate, unlucky universe? Or do rich and wealthier people and countries and poorer and impoverished people and countries come from and depend on the same system, playing by the same rules?

Impoverishment is not a "natural disaster", is not created in a vacuum, but rather is a deliberate part of the local-to-global economic/ legal/ political order that is kept in place with laws related to control over property and resources, production and creation of wealth. Repression (inside borders) and invasions (across borders) are often used to keep in place the local-to-global economic/ legal/ political order.

### SAME SYSTEM, SAME RULES

If millionaires and billionaires earn and deserve their wealth, property and power, it follows that impoverished billions of people earn and deserve their malnutrition, disease and starvation ... and powerlessness.

Thus, owners of and investors in global shoe or clothing companies earn and deserve their billions and millions, just as their workers - far-away or close-by - earn and deserve \$1 to \$5/a day, earn and deserve to be fired, threatened or killed for organizing in the work place, earn and deserve to be shut out of the factory when it

moves to a cheaper place.

Same system, same rules.

Owners of and investors in global mining companies earn and deserve billion and million dollar profits, just as their local workers earn and deserve low wages, often working in harmful conditions, until the mineral resources run out and the company departs, leaving environmental destruction in the earth, waters and air, leaving health harms in the local community; just as the impoverished local communities earn and deserve to be forcibly displaced, to make way for the mine project.

Same system, same rules.

Owners of and investors in the global military industry earn and deserve their billions and million dollar returns, just as the victims of wars and of repression earn and deserve their suffering and death at the hands of the machinery invested in, used and profited from.

Same system, same rules.

It is worse than contradictory to praise and laud the billionaire and millionaire owners of and investors in the global economic/ legal/ political system, while lamenting and decrying the exploitation, impoverishment, repression and environmental destruction that the global economic/ legal/ political system produces.

We can't have it both ways.

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"Would you and your children be any less dead  
by starvation than by bullets."

(Judy Loo)

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### AN AMERICAN DREAM

Robert Kaplan writes in the *American Monthly* of "our [referring to the U.S.] often moralistic attempts to impose Western parliamentary systems on other countries", like "the attempts of Western colonialists - many of who were equally idealistic - to replace well-functioning chieftaincy and tribal patronage systems with foreign



administrative practices." (*New York Times*, January 4, 1998)

... as if European expansionism was actually about bringing foreign practices ...

... as if this is what the U.S. and western countries are interested in across the globe today

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"There is nothing wrong with the worship of wealth or glamour;  
it's a national pastime."

(Michael Specter, *New York Times*)

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#### DYING IN CHIAPAS, OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

The paramilitary squad that carried out the December 22, 1997 massacre of 45 Mayan Tzotzil people, in the village of Acteal, Chiapas, is called "Justice and Peace." The Chiapas government recently granted them \$530,000 for "development" projects.

#### FUNDAMENTAL PEACE OF MIND - GRACIAS A LA VIDA

There we were, 9 adults and my 4-year-old daughter Camila, in a meeting about human rights in Chiapas. "Dad," she whispers to me, "if a kid is at a meeting with adults, can that kid have five cookies?" "How many have you had?" I whispered back. "Four," she says. "Yes, you can have one more."

#### A BASIC NEED TO A DECENT BURIAL

In the hot, dry valley of Rabinal, center of the Mayan-Achi region of Guatemala, I talk with Lorenzo in the shade of a tree. In 1982, he and three friends used a rope to haul his dad - minus a finger, clothes and an eye - out of a ravine where the Army had tossed his body; they hurriedly buried him, and fled. Sixteen years later, Lorenzo wants to dig up his dad's remains and give him a proper burial.

#### DYING OF "FREEDOM"

The Heritage Foundation argues that Guatemala, El Salvador and Panama have "mostly free" economies and that Cuba has a "repressed" economy. In many "mostly free" economies across the world, billions of people are born to subsist and die in poverty.

#### WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION: REMEMBERING AGENT ORANGE

The U.S. and other western nations are indignant about Iraq's chemical weapons that we claim they have.

A Mexican newspaper reports that in people are protesting NASA plans to test chemical weapons at an U.S. Army base in Puerto Rico. The U.S. is the world's largest producer and owner of chemical weapons. (*The News*, February 2, 1998)

Do you remember Agent Orange? Know what it is? Know which Army used it? Where? When?

#### PINPRICKS

As a child going to the dentist or doctor, I feared the needle's pinprick - the word used by the *Washington Post* (February 14, 1998) to describe bombing raids the U.S. and Britain have unleashed on Iraq since the end of the 1991 "Operation Desert Storm".

Can you imagine a "pinprick" killing your whole family and other community members, who are then buried as "collateral damage"?

#### A LUCKY TRAVELLER IN CHIAPAS

On December 21, 1997, a poor Mayan-Tzotzil man went to the city of San Cristobal to pick up supplies from the Red Cross. On December 22, the "Justice and Peace" death squad entered his home village of Acteal and massacred 45 women, children and men, including his family. For his trip to San Cristobal de las Casas, he is alive today.

**COMPLICITE JOURNALISM**

"Bombing Iraq is not enough." (*New York Times* headline, January 30, 1998)  
Enough what?

**WITH "SECURITY" LIKE THIS, WHO NEEDS TERRORISTS**

The United Nations Security Council, with five permanent members (U.S., France, Britain, Russia and China) having veto votes, is charged with "maintaining [global] peace and security". These five countries account for 85% of all weapons production and sales worldwide and are involved directly or indirectly in most wars and conflicts.

**PROTEST SIGN - in Indonesia**

"Wanted: Rice, Sugar, Cooking Oil, Democracy."

**A CALL FROM GUATEMALA**

"Carlos was shot at, but he is ok," Annie Bird told me, calling from Guatemala. They shot at Carlos, I repeat to myself. "They" are ex-soldiers and ex-patrollers. They missed.

In 1982, Carlos Chen's first wife, pregnant at the time, was killed along with their two infants and 174 other people, in the March 13, Rio Negro massacre. Since that time Carlos has worked to expose the truth about the atrocities and about who committed them.

He will keep on doing human rights work; we will continue to support his work and pray that 'they' always miss.

**A BIT OF TRUTH SLIPS OUT - from Iraq**

"Crippling international trade sanctions have wiped out Iraq's middle class, pulverized its industrial base and ruined education and health systems that were once the envy of the Arab world." (*Washington Post*, March 1, 1998) "Once", before the U.S. war of aggression.

**NUMBERS THAT DEFINE OUR WORLD**

The top 1% of Americans have more wealth than the bottom 90%. (Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, *Washington Post*, March 1, 1998)

**THINGS THEY WORK HARD AT TO ENSURE WE DON'T KNOW**

The U.S. Senate reports that 90% of the component parts of Iraq's biological weapons systems were sold to Iraq by U.S. corporations in the 1980s. Do you remember reading this in your mainstream news? Did you know this?

**WHO KILLED 14-MONTH OLD MARIO**

"In order to understand poverty, one must listen to those who survive it, daily. What we listened to were sad stories ..., that Mario - youngest son of Antonio and Octavia - died from bronchitis. When they arrived at the clinic, the doctor wasn't in and they had to come back the next day. But during the night he got worse and they started out again on the mule but he died on the way, just like that, having lived 14 months. He died of bronchitis and poverty." (Francisco Arguello, *Central America Report*, April 1998)

**HAITIAN SAYING: THE SHARK'S TEETH ARE SWEETER THAN MISERY**

Most Haitian people have to make hard choices, every day, about survival and dying. Many try and cross the ocean to the U.S., some sink to death in shark-infested waters.

**A DREAM LIKE MINE**

Last night I dreamed of death squad violence. The faces of the killers - Guatemalan and South African - pursuing us have faded, but the dream and rage are palpable. The woman I was fleeing with had been captured before, and raped, and she wasn't going to let it happen again. We fought back. I threw an aggressive young man (member of the death squad) off the top of a building; he had to die because he would rape and kill again. I saw him crushed against the pavement below. ... It was best to wake up and pull myself out of this dream. (Book: *A Dream Like Mine*, by M.T. Kelly)



**ORDINARY AND EXTRA-ORDINARY**

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Toronto Star*)

Dear Mr. Harpur, I write in response to your March 3, 1998 article about how volunteer work is an inspiring sign of the times. You describe the compassion of people as "extraordinary". In so doing, you entrench what should be ordinary as extraordinary, render what is extraordinary as ordinary.

What should be extraordinary is that we live in a world where 17,000,000 citizens are killed by imposed poverty every year, a world where we watch Gulf War "turkey shoot" massacres live on CNN!

**THE SYMBOLISM AND LOGIC OF REPRESSION**

On April 28, 1998, two days after the Catholic Church published the "REMH report" (Recovery of the Historical Memory) documenting the repression and genocide in Guatemala, assassins killed Bishop Juan Gerardi, 75-year-old director of the project. They bashed in his skull and left his body for all to see.

**NOT "SENSELESS" REPRESSION**

The U.S. government officially deplores the "senseless act of violence" that left Guatemalan Bishop Juan Gerardi dead, as if they really deplored this, as if the assassination were senseless.

The U.S. has long trained Latin American soldiers and officers (in the School of the Americas, Fort Benning, GA, for starters) to plan and carry out assassinations, torture, massacres, beatings and rapes, targeting human rights leaders ... like Bishop Gerardi.

**RE-CONCILE WHAT**

Recently bludgeoned-to-death Bishop Juan Gerardi used to tell visiting delegations: "In Guatemala, we should not talk of reconciliation between the minority dominant *ladino* population and the majority impoverished Mayan population. How can we reconcile that which was never "conciled" in the first place?"

**WITH JUSTICE LIKE THIS, WHO NEEDS INJUSTICE**

Judge Robert Elliot sentenced 25 Americans to jail for six months and fined them \$3000 each for trespassing. All were protesting the School of the Americas (SOA) in Fort Benning, Georgia, a U.S. military training camp. Rifa Steinhagan, a "guilty" 69-year-old nun from Minnesota, said: "There is something wrong when we who participate in a solemn funeral procession are sent to prison, while SOA graduates, who did the killing [in numerous Latin American countries] get amnesties and will not spend a day behind bars." (*Central America Report*, February 1998)

**NUCLEAR POWERED DECEPTION**

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *New York Times*)

In "Every Nation's Just Another U.S." (*New York Times*, June 7, 1998), Tim Weiner writes that there was "naivete at the C.I.A." in regards to the nuclear bombs tests by India and Pakistan. Weiner claims the U.S. was guilty of "mirror-imaging", not learning from Machiavelli that one should "never assume the other guy will never do something you would never do".

Did Weiner forget which country controls the world's largest nuclear arsenal? Which country has used them in conflict?

It is simple. India and Pakistan want - like the U.S. - to have nuclear weapons and be able to use them.

**RIVER STORIES FROM ARGENTINA**

Using the alias Mario Gomez, an Argentine policeman breaks two decades of silence. During the 1976-83 military dictatorship (they were "fighting communism" in Argentina as well!), he was a senior officer in a "task group". The "operations" his task group carried out included killing French nuns Leonie Duquet and Alice Doman. They put their bodies in a sealed drum and dumped it in a river.

**"THE USUAL BULLET TO THE BACK OF THE HEAD" IN GUATEMALA**

The mayor of Santa Cruz del Quiche was killed last night "con el respectivo tiro de gracia" ("with the usual bullet to the back of the head"). (*La Hora* newspaper, May 7, 1998)

**FISHING STORIES FROM CHILE**

Raul Choque, a deep sea fishing champion, will be called to testify before Chilean Judge Gatica about how he regularly "caught" bodies tied to boulders, as he fished in Pisagua Bay, northern Chile. These catches happened during the military regime of General Pinochet that was backed by the U.S., by Canada and Europe, global copper mining companies and the Chilean oligarchy.

**A NORMAL GUY. NOT A NORMAL JOB**

My two-year old son Lucas and I took Fedy to the Washington Dulles airport and said goodbye. I make special note of visits with people I know who live in the cross-hairs of assassins. Fedy is a normal guy who has spent years digging up bodies from mass graves across Guatemala. It is good that Lucas was at the airport - fun to play with, hug and tickle. There are only so many things to say to a guy returning home to dig up mass graves in a country where he is a marked man.

**WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT CALL IT EXPLOITATION AND INJUSTICE**

New York Times reporter Diana Jean Schemo reports movingly on how millions of Brazilians live in conditions of poverty (May 28, 1998) and does not report on the causes of poverty.

"The reporter" enters the home of Severino Jose da Silva, father of 5, whose children are languishing in and dying of poverty; "Luciana, 22, lies curled into herself in a corner of a back room, laughing wildly and unpredictably, after an operation to remove a brain tumor two years ago went awry."

That is the story. Even after a personal visit with Luciana, the reporter is not moved to investigate and report on such an unjust economic model that causes millions of these atrocious deaths every year. Would this reporter have entered Nazi death camps, described the state of the surviving victims, and not made any reference to who were orchestrating this massive killing, and why?

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"If I give food to the poor, they call me a Saint.  
If I ask why there are poor, they call me a communist."  
(Brazilian Catholic Priest Helder Camera)

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**"EARNINGS"**

Investment firm Goldman and Sachs will sell its stock on the open market. Each partner stands to "earn" \$100,000,000 in cash, stocks and options. (Washington Post, June 15, 1998)

When one person can "earn" \$100,000,000, then 3 billion people across the planet "earn" less than \$2 /day, working much harder, every day (no weekends or vacations), than any investor or banker.

**WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT CALL IT EXPLOITATION AND INJUSTICE**

"Mrs. Tratiworn stood barefoot in the vast dump (of Jakarta, Indonesia), where she survives scavenging rubbish, and described her dreams for her 3-year old son. She wants him to grow up and work in a sweat-shop." (New York Times, June 16, 1998)

That is the story. No analysis about how this existence is the result of injustice and exploitation, that life in the dump is basically slavery, and that "sweat-shops" are often not much better.

**THE LOGIC OF THE GLOBAL ORDER**

In Nigeria,  
global weapons companies sue Shell Oil Company  
for renegeing on contracts to purchase weapons  
that Shell Oil was providing to Nigerian "security" forces  
who were using the weapons  
to carry out repression  
against exploited, impoverished Nigerian people  
who were protesting Shell Oil operations  
that were destroying the homelands of the Ogoni people  
so as to extract cheap oil  
and export it to consumers in western countries  
where the weapons industry uses the oil



to produce and operate weapons systems and then enter into binding contracts to sell the weapons ...

### **ESCRATCHING, FROM TIERRA DEL FUEGO TO TORONTO**

In Argentina, a new word is being used, feared by the powerful: *escratches*. Members of HIJOS (organization of daughters and sons of victims of Argentina's "dirty war") gather outside the homes of former officers of the military regime, denouncing that a murderer/torturer lives in the house. If this catches on, there will be *escratching* from Tierra del Fuego to Toronto.

### **FOR SALE EVERYWHERE: 'UNIQUENESS'**

In the Boston Amtrak train station, banners hang with photos of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and John Lennon. Apple computers paid these folks, or their estates, for the use of their images: "Think different" written on each banner, in hopes of getting people to think, act and spend their money the same.

### **CLINTON POLICIES BOMB**

"Clinton, Dogged by Scandal, Juggled Politics and Bombing."  
(*New York Times* headline, August 22, 1998)

### **PAVLOV AND MARSHALL MCCLUHAN WERE RIGHT**

The manager of the church in Washington DC, where my organization (Rights Action) has an office, handed us a memo (August 26, 1998):

"SUBJECT: Increased Security. In light of ... the increased threat from terrorist organizations ... we are increasing our security in connection with [the church's] facilities. ... First, how we will prevent a disaster, or lessen its impact on our [area]. The second part will address what our role will be in the event of a disaster in our community. ... If you see anything suspicious ... ask [us]. ... If we are unavailable and you are in doubt, call the police."

In a meeting, the manager explained to us: "These measures will

be in place until they are pushed back to the desert." A silence followed. My colleague asked who "they" were? Another silence. He did not answer.

What we need is not increased fear and ignorance of, and racism against "they" who should be "pushed back to the desert", but education and debate in our homes, communities, schools, work-places, about whether and how we are part of the global problem of terrorism.

### **ELECTION STRATEGY**

Sudan and Afghanistan have just been bombed: "Polls show high marks for President Clinton ...". (*New York Times*, August 22, 1998)

Do Clinton-supporters cheer when their children beat up weaker kids in the school-yard?

### **"NO WAR FOR MONICA"**

It'll make you laugh, and should make you cry. People march in the streets of Khartoum, Indonesia, protesting the U.S. bombing of Sudan. A sign: "No war for Monica". President Clinton has been caught in a sex scandal and bombing countries diverts attention.

### **AMERICAN DREAMS**

"Most Americans don't understand why other nations harbor deep grievances towards the U.S. which, after all, means well."  
(*Hartford Courant*, August 23, 1998)  
Perhaps not.

And, most Americans don't understand where Panama is (invaded in 1989), who the Sandinistas are (a democratic government of Nicaragua that was attacked and undermined - 40,000 civilians killed), where most of their minerals and coffee come from, where most of their clothes, oil, bananas, gold and soccer balls come from, where most of their investments go, what the United Fruit Company did in Guatemala in 1954, what "education and training" really goes on at the U.S. military's School of the Americas (in the name of fighting terrorism, communism, etc.).

### CONSIDERING THE PRESIDENT'S WORDS

[Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Boston Globe*, August 21, 1998]

In a "somber" address to the nation about the bombing of Afghanistan and Sudan, President Clinton declares: "Our target was terror."

But, the U.S. missile strikes were illegal. How are they different from terrorist attacks that kill innocent civilians?

Clinton says: "Our mission was clear: to strike at the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Osama bin Laden, perhaps the pre-eminent organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world today."

But, considering all the military regimes, "freedom fighters", School of the Americas graduates and death squads the U.S. has trained, financed and equipped - including the "Taliban" in Afghanistan with whom Osama bin Laden fought - the U.S. has an extensive track record as an "organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world."

Clinton says: "America is and remains a target of terrorists precisely because we are leaders; because we act to advance peace, democracy and basic human values. ... The groups associated with [Osama bin Laden] ... share a hatred of democracy ..."

But, starting generations before the U.S. orchestrated coup in 1954 against the democratic government of Guatemala, including interventions and coups in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba and Grenada (talking only about the Americas), has not the U.S. demonstrated a "hatred for democracy"?

Clinton says: "...[A] fanatical glorification of violence, ..."

But, consider the daily TV coverage of "Operation Desert Storm"; consider Hollywood and MTV productions! Does there not exist in North American culture and political mindset a "fanatical glorification of violence"?

Clinton says: "[O]ur actions were aimed at fanatics who wrap murder in the cloak of righteousness ... [who] justify the murder of

innocents."

But, my thoughts go to the countless civilians massacred, assassinated and disappeared by U.S. trained, financed, equipped military regimes and movements in Latin America, Africa, Vietnam, and beyond, in the name of defending democracy and liberty, defending 'western values', etc.

Clinton says: "Their history is bloody. ..."

But, if one added the total number of civilians killed and maimed in international or internal conflicts that the U.S. has been directly or indirectly involved in, in the 20th century, one may find the United States has as bloody a history as any other nation.

Clinton says: "The terrorists have made the United States their adversary precisely because of what we stand for and what we stand against ..."

But, for victims of many U.S.-created and -backed regimes around the world, their anger is because of what the U.S. does: creates repression and imposes poverty and stands against their aspirations for democracy and human rights.

### EXPLAINING UNITED STATE'S GLOBAL STRATEGY

"We have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population. ... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships, which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security.

To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and daydreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction. ...

We should cease to talk about vague and ... unreal objectives as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization.



The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better."

(Internal U.S. government document, written in 1948 by George Kennan, State Department planning staff, explaining United State's global strategy)

## ELECTION STRATEGY

The day after the U.S. attacked Afghanistan and the Sudan, 70% of Americans, polled by the *New York Times* and *CBS News*, approved the bombing.

## PREPARING THE MASSES (you and me) FOR WAR

"[M]oving against terrorist groups may require provocative military actions that violate the sovereignty of other countries, threaten civilian populations and intensify anti-American sentiment." In this way, the *New York Times* (editorial, August 22, 1998) prepares the public that the U.S. may have to kill innocent civilians and violate international law in the fight against "terrorist" groups that -- kill innocent civilians and violate international law.

## "CIVILIZED CONDUCT"

The *Hartford Courant* asks: "What Will Eradicate Terrorists?" (August 23, 1998): "[T]hose who violate basic rules of civilized conduct ... should be punished wherever they are found."

But what if a country, say the United States, illegally intervened in Vietnam, Guatemala, Angola, Haiti, Mozambique, Nicaragua, ... and contributed to the killing of millions of people?

## WITH "CREDIBLE INFORMATION" LIKE THIS, WHO NEEDS LIES

"At the United Nations, the Security Council rejects a request by Arab States ... to send inspectors to search the rubble in Khartoum (Sudan) for signs of chemicals related to VX. "I don't see what the

purpose of a fact-finding study would be," Peter Burleigh, deputy American representative to the U.N. said. "We have credible information that fully justifies the strike we made on that one facility in Khartoum." ( *New York Times*, August 25, 1998)

The U.S. plays executor, prosecutor, jury and judge. The U.N. (with veto votes going to Britain, China, France, Russia, U.S.) complies.

## JEEZ, THE THINGS PEOPLE GET AWAY WITH SAYING

Ralph Peters, a retired U.S. Army intelligence officer: "In the struggle against international terrorism ... we have crippled ourselves by a strict observance of laws that our opponents ignore or turn against us. ... [W]e are so obsessed with international law ... that we handcuff ourselves, while allowing the terrorists to turn borders and legalisms against us. But laws lose their validity when they no longer protect those who adhere to them."

In light of millions of civilians killed in Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq, Chile, Angola, Nicaragua, Mozambique, El Salvador, the Congo, Guatemala, due to direct and indirect U.S. military interventions, to which laws and precedents is Mr. Peters referring?

"[W]e need to be honest about these issues now", Mr. Peters continues. "... [W]e have been crippled by our past reluctance to violate the sovereignty of states..." ( *Washington Post*, August 30, 1998)

One reads nothing in the *Washington Post* article about dozens of illegal invasions, interventions and "sovereignty" violations across the globe.

## CLASS ANALYSIS

"When I see someone who is making anywhere from \$300,000 to \$750,000 a year, that's middle class. When I see anyone above that, that's upper class." (Fred Heineman, Republican Congressman, North Carolina, cited in *Cult of Impotence* by Linda McQuaig).

To what class do the 3 billion people belong, that earn under \$2/day?

### ANY "DECLARATION OF WAR" WILL DO

The *Boston Globe* informs the reader that Bin Laden "declared war on the United States." How can a man "declare war" on a country?

### THE ART OF KILLING – PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Timothy McVeigh sits on death row, guilty of bombing an Oklahoma City federal building, killing over 100 American citizens.

Then soldier Timothy McVeigh sent his Aunt Edna a letter referring to the U.S. attack on Iraq: "We did some terrible things to those Iraqis. Killing Iraqis was real hard at first, but after a while killing [them] got easier." (*New York Times*, May 1998)

### LOS SIN NOMBRES - IN THE AMERICAS

Camilo sat alone in a restaurant, drinking rum and coke. Haggard, he looked right through me. Drinking was an easy break from the life he leads, fighting the structures of poverty and repression in the Americas, defending the rights of *los sin nombres*, he murmurs (the without names).

### CRYING DAYS – A PANDORA'S BOX OF MEMORIES

These days, more than most, have been crying days. Most days, I try to do things about repression and poverty, about killer hurricanes ("Mitch") and other non-natural disasters that kill the poor, and this is sad enough ... and then Armando visits.

Armando lies on our couch, but sleeps little. Two days ago, he came to Washington DC and gave his testimony to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights ... opening his Pandora's Box of memories and trauma.

Armando hears voices in his sleep – sometimes even when he is awake. He sees killers behind lampposts. He trusts no one, not even himself. A Guatemalan man, Armando is a survivor of and eyewitness to the "Dos Erres" massacres in the Peten department. Over 200 people, including his family and friends, were mowed down that day in 1982.

We humans weren't made to witness and survive what Armando witnessed and survived. We aren't prepared for torture, rape, smashing heads open, cutting fetuses from wombs, and killing the lot anyway ... let alone witnessing this.

No Armando, you are not crazy. Your heart, soul and mind have been punished and harmed and you can't handle this. Not surprising. And you have to handle this, just the way it is. And even when you bottle it up, it leaks out, bit by bit, all your life.

We hope our home provides Armando a tad of security, a bit of rest. Soon he returns to Guatemala – Pandora's Box is open, the devil of trauma loose.

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"People who have endured terror do not suddenly fling open their window to let in the sun. For a long time, they observe its warmth without quite believing that it once again belonged to them."  
(Lawrence Thornton, *Naming the Spirits*, p.46)

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### APARTHEID CRIMES PAY

Camila – four years old – phoned me at work, all by herself. "How are you, *mi cuate*," I ask, and we start talking. "Are you running home soon?" "Well, I am not quite sure when." "Well, when you get home can I have a bath or shower with you?" Sitting alone in my office, I tell her yes, of course, that it would be greatest joy in the world for me.

On the radio, Peter Gabriel sings "Biko", about a human rights leader tortured and assassinated in South Africa by the western-backed Apartheid regime. The *New York Times* reports how South African torturers stand before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Johannesburg and, questioned by their actual victims admit to murdering people, committing torture, rape and other acts of brutal human degradation. For their honesty, these torturers will live free from prosecution, comfortable in their middle and upper class neighborhoods, gardens tended to by poor blacks in the new, "democratic" South Africa.

Bishop Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work for justice



in South Africa. He oversaw the work of the South African Commission of Truth and Reconciliation that investigated the well-planned horrors of the racist regime. Responding to people who complain the Commission is interested in vengeance, he says: "It is an incredible thing that "blacks", who still live in shacks, squalor and poverty, come to work in your beautiful homes and they don't say "We're going to murder all of you in your beds'."

#### **PINOCHET SHOULD GIVE THANKS - NOVEMBER 25, 1998**

At 9:05am, I learned that the British House of Lords ruled that former Chilean leader and war criminal General Pinochet did not benefit from immunity for rape, disappearances, torture, murder..., all done in the name of the "war on communism" and backed by the U.S., Britain and other western nations and corporations.

Unlike most days, today is not a good day for a dictator. For mass violators of civil and political rights, for torturers, rapists, murderers, it isn't their day, at least for today, which makes it a different day, not a normal day, unfortunately – but thankfully.

It should be that every day is a bad day for human rights violators and Pinochet has been one of the 'best' in Latin America, top 20 anyway. Future member of the Dictator Hall of Fame!

Pinochet should give thanks  
that he was legally detained,  
and not for trumped up reasons;  
that he has access to lawyers;  
and not strip-searched, tortured or raped;  
that he was not disappeared,  
or thrown alive from a plane, to sharks waiting below;  
and, that his body was not found floating down river from Santiago,  
Chile.

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"Chileans tell the story of how the musician Victor Jara had his hands cut off in front of a crowd in the Santiago stadium. Before they shot him, Pinochet's soldiers threw his guitar at him and mockingly ordered him to play."  
(Arundhati Roy, *The Guardian*, September 30, 2002)

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#### **WITH "LIBERATION" LIKE THIS ...**

The U.S. Congress passed the "Iraq Liberation Bill": \$100 million to overthrow the government of Iraq. Rights will be violated; people killed by bombs and poverty; contracts for re-building will be awarded.

Representative Benjamin Gilman: "This bill will give our government additional tools with which to confront the threat to international peace and security."

#### **GRAFFITI - In Chiapas**

"We do not struggle and fight to have more, but because we have nothing."

#### **"WHERE THE DAMAGE IS INTENDED TO BE DONE"**

"Sanctions are starving to death 6000 Iraqi infants every month ... I no longer want to be a part of that." (Denis Halliday, former Assistant to the Secretary General of the United Nations, *New York Times*, October 18, 1998)

"Those sanctions do damage where the damage is intended to be done." (White House spokesperson Michael McCurry, June 19, 1998)

#### **U.S. FOREIGN POLICY - NOT A "MISTAKE"**

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *New York Times*)

While I agree that the U.S. government should disclose "all it knows about the crimes of the Pinochet dictatorship," (editorial, December 5, 1998) the role the U.S. played in Chile was no "mistake."

During the past 50 years, if the U.S. had backed a repressive regime in Latin America once – perhaps twice –, perhaps then one could argue that a "mistake" was made. Since 1948, the U.S. has, as policy, backed many repressive regimes and pressured or overthrown many governments.

And lets us not be surprised at the reticence of the U.S. to release

all information it has concerning repression in Chile (or any other country in Latin America). Declassified, this information would show the U.S. has been a direct and indirect contributor to systematic violations of human rights and brutality in many countries of the Americas.

### LOGIC OF THE GLOBAL ORDER

Around the world, people suffer in conditions of poverty and exploitation, discriminations, repression and impunity.

Then: people form organizations and struggle for justice, human rights and empowerment, so that they don't have to suffer in conditions of poverty, exploitation, discriminations and impunity.

Then: the rich and powerful use repression and impunity against the protesting people, resulting in death, suffering and loss.

Then: the repression survivors experience trauma, fear and silence.

Then: the survivors survive through faith and courage.

Then: the survivors break the silence around their repression, suffering and loss and begin truth telling.

Then: the survivors organize and struggle for justice, human rights and empowerment.

Then: the powerful plan and employ repression with impunity so as to re-silence the people they previously repressed and exploited.

### THE ARABS ARE TO BLAME ... FOR "THIRD WORLD" DEBT AS WELL

"... The greatest challenge to global prosperity since the depression presented itself in the form of an Arab oil embargo that promptly led to spiraling inflation and recession in the western world and, within a few years, a third world debt crisis that stifled development in Latin America for a generation."

This is how the *New York Times* (September 16, 1998) editorial board blames the ills of poverty (including the "debt crisis" in Latin America) on the Arabs. And to think that all along I have been ranting about how the global north unjustly enriches itself at the expense of the global south!

### GRAFFITI – in Ecuador

EEUU, *garantes del hambre.* (U.S.A., guarantors of hunger)

### HURRICANES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

One can report on Hurricane Mitch (October 1998) and give details like: close to 30,000 Hondurans and Nicaraguans were killed and disappeared; 2,000,000 people were otherwise affected, losing their shacks, small businesses, plots of land, etc. But this barely describes the death and destruction.

"Natural disaster, my foot", says Fernando's mom in Guatemala: "It is poverty that killed those people and wrecked their lives. The majority of people in Central America live in poverty, subsisting week to week, waiting for the rains and floods to wipe them off the barren hillsides and down the over-flowing rivers."

"We will never know the real death toll, since many people were buried by mud. Entire families died in distant villages where there is no one to report their disappearance." (Tito Sequeira, Nicaraguan Government)

### "NATURAL" DISASTERS

"10,000 people die in Honduras from Hurricane Mitch. 10,000 people die all the time in Central America, on a bad Friday of cholera." (Email from Matt)

### WE ARE ALL (NOT) EQUAL

In *Words Into Action*, Oxfam addresses how to use human rights laws to remedy poverty. One reads: "poverty affects us all, as individuals or nations. ... And in the end, we all suffer." (p.31) As slave-owners suffered like their slaves, as rapists like their victims...

### WHAT KIND OF ECONOMY IS THIS

Brazil is the world's second largest food exporter, mostly to North American and European consumers. One-third of Brazilians do not have enough to eat; malnutrition causes 70% of deaths in children under the age of 5.



**WHITE UNDERSTATEMENT**

"In a world of white privilege, some of what we have is unearned."  
(Robert Jensen, July 26, 1998, *Houston Chronicle*)

**THE THINGS WE DO FOR "SECURITY"**

At the World Fellowship retreat center (New Hampshire, August 1998), Tom, a Vietnam War vet, said: "I realized that killing or sparing the life of one more Vietnamese farmer, standing in his rice field, looking right at me, hands in front of his face, praying, was not going to change one iota the security of my nation state."

**A CALL FROM GUATEMALA**

Kate called to say they shot Pedrina Burrero's son. "They" are bad guys with guns, former military and paramilitaries. Pedrina is a courageous Mayan community leader – and a friend.

She should be a widely recognized world leader.

She survived the massacres of the 1980s – eye-witness to the September 15, 1981 massacre of close to 1000 poor Mayan people in the Rabinal town square. Many of her family did not. She has spent much of the 1990s, looking for and digging up mass graves. I can't believe they shot Pedrina's child; I can't believe they shot hundreds of millions of Pedrina's children; I can't believe my shoulder is swelling again ... tension.

**"AIRSTRIKES OF MERCY"**

In the *Wall Street Journal*, an article addresses the illegal bombing runs the U.S. and Britain are making over Iraq. Bold headline: "Airstrikes of Mercy."

**EMINENT SATISFACTION**

"For most of the [U.S.] troops, the attack on Iraq proved a short-lived though eminently satisfying distraction from the day-to-day routine of launching aircraft to patrol the no flight zone." (*New York Times*, December 24, 1998)

**1999: SE LO LLEVO PANCHO****WHY WRITE**

"For years, Chileans have lived a fragile peace, based on silence and prudence; few desire confrontation. Because of fear we have swept memory under the rug. We feared words, we feared calling things by their names. We walked on eggshells, and we treated each other with caution and suspicion.

"That is the heritage of (the regime of ex-General Pinochet), a nation in fear. ... I feel no hatred for Pinochet. ... Hatred is a very heavy burden, one I shook off many years ago, when I started writing. Writing has allowed me to exorcize most of my demons and transform my pain into strength."

(Isabel Allende, *New York Times*, January 17, 1999)

**THE REPUBLIC OF STREET CHILDREN**

"If the 100 million street children throughout the world were all in the same place, they would have their own country, a seat at the United Nations and loans from the World Bank." (Casa Alianza)

**OOOPS, SORRY. AGAIN, WE WERE WRONG TO BOMB**

Not in bold letters, not on the front page, the *New York Times* (February 9, 1999) reported that no evidence of chemical weapons was found in the Al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan, that was bombed by the U.S.

The C.I.A. was wrong.  
 The Pentagon was wrong.  
 The government was wrong.  
 The media was wrong.  
 The talk-show "experts" were wrong.  
 The chatly man at the next table in the restaurant was wrong.

### "STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT" FOR WHOM

If I say, 'We need structural adjustments to how the global economic, political and military systems work, so as to bring about equality, justice and environmental well-being across the globe', I am dismissed as "anti-development", a leftist...

When the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – an agency of the G8 rich nation club (U.S., Britain, France, Canada, Germany, Italy, Russia, Japan) – imposes "structural adjustment" economic policies on the exploited countries of the global south, forcing open their economies to G8 investors and companies, our politicians, media and academics applaud.

### THE WEIGHT OF A WORD AND A DOLLAR

Each dollar raised for the exploited, oppressed people of Central America has to address 500 years of structural exploitation, repression and racism, and provide the building blocks to build a global community of equality, justice and environmental well-being.

Each word written and each speech given has to overcome 500 years of distorted history and inspire a global community of equality, justice and environmental well-being.

### "500 YEARS OF HURRICANE MITCH"

In Tegucigalpa, we walk by the Choluteca River that rose up in October 1998 during Hurricane Mitch, killing and disappearing 30,000 people in Honduras and Nicaragua. On steep city mountainsides, where mudslides overran homes and lives, the poor again build precarious huts.

"The time of crisis is decreasing, returning us to the crisis of poverty,"

said Miranda. "500 years of Hurricane Mitch," said Bertha Caceres.

### "MUDSLIDE NEIGHBORHOOD": THE BANALITY OF POVERTY

Why should I soft-peddle what Ruth's life of poverty, exploitation and injustice is like, even if some call me "strident", a "zealot"? Ruth lives in a hut on a steep hillside in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in a neighborhood called *Barrio de los Drubs* (Mudslide Neighborhood). Holes in the roof and walls. One room. No jobs, no minimum wage, no public health, education, transportation. Lots of "free" trade and "structural adjustment".

### TRUTH COMMISSION FOR THE U.S.

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *New York Times*)

With respect to "Guatemala's Nightmare Past" (editorial, February 28, 1999), you write that Guatemalan President Alvaro Arzu should "establish a body to see that the recommendations (of the U.N. Commission for Historical Clarification) are carried out" and military officers accused of serious crimes should be, at a minimum, dismissed.

It is self-serving and misleading of the *New York Times* to report that the U.S. provided more money than any other country to support the work of the Commission for Historical Clarification and not also report that the U.S. funded, trained and worked directly with soldiers, officers and intelligence services, who planned and carried out genocide and repression.

A commission should be established in the U.S. to investigate the role the U.S. government and military played in decades of repression in Guatemala. U.S. government and military officials found to have contributed directly or indirectly to human rights violations – including the genocide – should be tried criminally and the U.S. government should be held to pay reparations to the victims' families.

### SHINING A SPOT-LIGHT ON TORTURE

(International Day in Support of Torture Victims and Survivors, June 26, 1999)

President Clinton said: "Assisting torture victims does not end the



curse of torture. The United States will continue its efforts to shine a spotlight on this horrible practice wherever it occurs and we will do all we can to bring an end to it." (October 30, 1998)

The U.S. shines spotlights on torture and repression only when it is politically expedient to sully the reputation of a disliked country or rebel movement.

Want to shine a spotlight? Then shine it on classified information documenting how the U.S. has financed, trained and armed torturers across the world since 1948, especially in Latin America, in places like the Pentagon-operated School of the Americas.

Shine it on the dossiers of U.S. agents who have participated in torture – destroying bodies, minds and souls, in the name of fighting communism, Marxism, whatever "ism" of the day it might be.

It is the moral and legal imperative of U.S. citizens, politicians, pundits and celebrity "stars" to shine powerful spotlights on themselves, holding their government – and all implicated officials and agents – accountable for their direct and indirect participation in torture across the planet.

To the victims of torture worldwide, despite the terrible crimes intentionally visited upon you, may you shine again, may you shine on.

#### 'SHE MADE ME HIT HER'

"Bombing best of many bad options." (*Washington Times* headline, April 6, 1999)

#### WEATHER FORECAST: A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR BOMBING

"Skies clear, NATO rains bombs." (*Washington Post* headline)

#### "ALL WE ARE SAYING IS GIVE [WAR] A CHANCE"

"We must give war a chance." (Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* in a TV interview)

#### 64 PEOPLE ERRANTLY BOMBED

Front-page color photo: Bodies splattered on the road to Kosovo. NATO Spokesperson: "They did it". The news report talks of "errant bombs". Who fabricated those errant bombs? Who fired them? After initial denials, NATO admitted bombing the civilian train ... Twice. "A mistake" our media and leaders insist. NATO apologizes for killing 64 people.

#### ONE FOR THE GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS

"Allied officials reported that NATO warplanes had flown 603 "missions" [bombing runs] in the last 24 hours, the highest number in the four-week bombardment."

#### FATIGUE

Today, in Washington DC, I gave a talk to 200 high school students – mostly pro-bombing kids from pro-bombing families in a pro-bombing country and century. Back and forth, we debated respectfully, firmly...

After, I am depressed. How easy for us, doing the bombing, to debate and agree or disagree, or pay no attention whatsoever, and go on living exactly how we live ... which will lead inevitably to finding more enemies to bomb and do more debating and justifying the need for enemies and bombing.

#### THE EXAMPLE OF COLUMBINE

President Clinton talks of the massacre of 25 high school students in Columbine, Colorado, carried out by students from the same school: "We must teach our children by our example to solve problems pacifically. We must do more to reach out to our children and teach them to express their anger and resolve their conflicts with words, not weapons."

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"Who is guilty of feckless moralizing? Of preaching peace while it wages war?

The U.S., which George Bush has called 'the most peaceful nation on earth'.

has been at war with one country or another every year,  
for the last 50 years."

(Arundhati Roy, *The Guardian*, September 30, 2002)

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### KIDS' PLAY-TIME, PARENTS' PLAY-TIME

In our apartment, 6-year-old Camila says "Dad, come find us." 3-year old Lucas: "Me too." The hourly news reports that NATO has just agreed to "take out" (bomb to bits) Serbia's power-grid.

"Dad, hurry up!"

NATO bombs a bridge and 47 civilians on it. Officials say the bridge was a "legitimate" target because things can cross the bridge like ... ah ... cars and trucks, weapons and soldiers, cows and goats, babies and clowns, moms and dads, cheese and wine... and little boys and girls who will never play hide and seek.

### MORAL DILEMMA: PLEASE STOP FORCING US TO BOMB YOU

Even as we rain bombs on the former Yugoslavia, Philip Shenon writes (*New York Times*, May 5, 1999): "Mr. [Saddam] Hussein might be planning a major confrontation with the U.S."

We haven't finished this year's bombing and are planning for next. The burden we carry! All these bad people and countries make us come and bomb and invade them.

### THE STORY OF A WOMAN CARRYING CARROTS IN NIS

"This morning, NATO aircraft carried out an attack against the Nis airfield, using combined-effect munitions." Translation: In Nis, a cluster bomb hit a hospital and outdoor market, killing 15 civilians. Where is Nis? Few in North America know. An old woman had been carrying carrots, just purchased in the market, when ...

### A BEAUTIFUL DAY ... FOR WHAT, WHERE

It is a beautiful spring day – May 14, 1999. I play with Lucas and Camila in Kalorama Park: the wind blows, sun shines.

In Karisa, Kosovo, it is a beautiful day for bombing. Ever heard of Karisa before? Ever heard of the 70 Albanian Kosovars killed? If they are lucky, their loved ones will be able to bury them.

NATO bombs today, for a better tomorrow for our children.

### SE LO LLEVO PANCHO: "THE REGISTRY OF DEATH"

In Guatemala, *se lo llevo pancho* is a way of saying that he or she is dead, akin to saying that so-and-so 'bit the dust.' For the Guatemalan military, *se lo llevo pancho* indicates that the person was "disappeared" or assassinated, usually after being tortured.

In my office, I watch Eva (my colleague from Guatemala who lost dozens of family members to the repression) looking through the "Registry of Death". A human rights group found a military document that listed 183 students, union leaders, professors, doctors and housewives who were illegally detained, and disappeared or assassinated by the Army between 1983 and 1985. Each photo has a written summary of who that person was, their name, age, and profession.

Eva runs her finger slowly down each page, turns a page, runs her finger slowly down again, looking for missing family members, for people she knows. Every now and then Eva stops at a photo, lingers, and closes her eyes.

I am amazed at the military's bureaucratic concern for tidiness and detail. Many profiles end with the statement: *Se lo llevo PANCHO*.

### CARLOS CUEVAS – SE LO LLEVO PANCHO

In the registry of death, I see a photo of Carlos Cuevas, brother of my friend. He was a young man when *se lo llevo PANCHO*. Seventeen years later, his family has final proof of what they have long known.

### THE INEFFICIENCIES OF TORTURE

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Brazil military regime was a U.S. and western ally in the so-called "war on communism". Thousands



were assassinated, raped, tortured and disappeared.

Recently, Joao Batista Campelo was nominated as chief of federal police. A priest published information proving Batista was a torturer. Batista resigned. Jair Bolsonaro, a retired military officer from the 60s and 70s, now a member of Congress, said: "That's what happens when you torture but you don't kill" (New York Times, July 11, 1999), meaning you leave potential witnesses alive!

### NO ONE IS ILLEGAL

In Guatemala, the dusty hot town of Tecun Uman is push-off point for Central Americans traveling through Mexico to try and enter the U.S.

Risks along the way: falling off trains and under steel wheels; corrupt and brutal police forces; exposure; starvation; dehydration; brutal and back-stabbing coyotes (people paid to take people across the U.S.-Mexican border); disease; poverty; rape; ... and, leaving behind family, friends, community, probably never again to be visited.

Here, in Tecun Uman, the *Casa del Migrante* is an oasis of humanity, a shelter for migrants heading north or south; not "illegal" – just people seeking a better life. 16-year-old Maria stands in the shade of a tree, holding a baby. Where is she from? How did she get here? Will she go north or south? How?

A mother came here not long ago to view the cadaver of her daughter who had washed in from the sea. Upon seeing her daughter, the mother was further distraught, believing her daughter had been raped. The priest, who works at the shelter, assured her that it was the sea that left her body looking like this, not a rape. Unconvinced, they had an autopsy done to show that the girl was a virgin. The mother took her home to be buried.

### NUMBERS, TIME AND LIVES

Ester came up to me on the bus – "Aren't you from Rights Action?" I had not seen her for a year. 65 years-old. Mother of a "disappeared" child, she was on her way to Quetzaltenango to talk to Spanish-language students about numbers, time and lives: 40 years of U.S. and western-supported repression; over 250,000

killed and disappeared; weekly exhumations of mass graves; a life of loss, mourning and struggle; gallons of tears (never cried) daily.

Yesterday, Ester was at the National Police Academy in Guatemala City where more bodies were found in a mass grave. From behind that tree, under that bed of roses, in that closet, at the bottom of that well, in that abandoned cave ... the truth is pushing itself up everywhere in Guatemala, to be seen and heard.

One day, maybe, Ester will find the body of her "disappeared" child; give her a proper burial, be re-connected in death.

### "SOCIAL CLEANSING"

On a street in Zone 1, Guatemala City, police stand around the body of Mario Joel Soto Coy, a 15-year-old "street kid" shot point-blank by a man, in broad day light. The boy had been hanging out on the corner.

"Social cleansing" is a term of trade. Men with guns, often police, kill street kids. Soto Coy was taking education courses with Casa Alianza, an NGO that works with and provides legal defense for street children.

### A PERUVIAN RECYCLING PROGRAM

During the 1990s in Peru, President Fujimori's U.S. and western-backed regime carried out the "La Cantuta" massacre of 8 students and 1 professor, amongst a long list of atrocities. They denied it.

Years later, confronted with undeniable proof, they admitted it. No one went to jail. However, they return the remains of the victims, dug up from a mass grave, to grieving family members in used cardboard boxes from the *Leche Gloria* (Glory Milk) company.

### BAY OF FUNDY (August 4, 1999)

Everyday, here,  
I stare at the ocean,  
the movement, the endless enormity.

And when my eyes tire,  
I close them and listen to the ocean,  
the waves coming in, coming in,  
the water going out, going out,  
the great motion and soft quiet.  
And when I tire, I sleep,  
and dream of the ocean,  
immense, endless and dark,  
always shifting,  
as deep as war and peace.

### "UNIMPORTANT PLACES"

Thomas Friedman (*New York Times*) asks "what we should do in unimportant places" around the world where there are so many problems?

So indoctrinated are we in our own racist superiority that few are shocked at his disdain as old and deep as European imperialism and global racism.

All these "unimportant places" are full of children and the elderly, dads and moms, uncles and sisters, working hard everyday to provide for their young and their elderly, for their families and communities, just like Thomas Friedman, I presume, and everyone else in North American.

### IRRITATING CONFIRMATIONS

Commenting on how the media distorts and manipulates information about global economic, political and military issues, Noam Chomsky admits: "It is irritating to have one's most cynical expectations verified."

### A BONE TO PICK

In the 1980s, the U.S. built the *El Aguacate* military base in Olancho, Honduras. Here, they armed and trained the U.S.-Contras that killed and terrorized the Nicaraguan people. Here they armed and trained terrorist death squads from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Now, 17 years later, a mass grave will be dug up and the exhumed bones will say that the U.S. and Central American military regimes were not fighting "communists" but torturing and killing women and men, girls and boys.

### THE THINGS THEY MAKE US "MISFIRE" AT THEM

The *New York Times* (January 26, 1999) reports that a U.S. missile "misfired" and 11 Iraqi civilians were killed. The Pentagon explained: The U.S. bombing raids had "been initiated by Saddam Hussein. This has been a deliberate set of attacks against our forces."

### AN "ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT" CANADIANS CAN LOVE

Off Canada's west coast, a ship founders, full of hungry, diseased people, and one dog. The *Victoria Times Colonist* reports on a huge public outcry: 97% of Canadian people want to send the "illegal" people away. A similar percentage of Canadians want to keep the dog, named "Breeze" by the media.

Lynn West, director of the Victoria SPCA, says Breeze and her litter "are going to be Canadian dogs." (*National Post*, August 17, 1999)

As the movement of Canadians grows to send the "illegal" people away, keeping the dog and puppies of course, 100 people stand outside the Canadian Forces Base in Esquimalt (where the "illegal" people are being kept), and - using a megaphone - speak in Mandarin to the detainees, welcoming them to Canada, letting them know that there are also people in Canada who care for them as people - men, women, children and elderly.

### A WAGER ABOUT OUTER SPACE EXPLORATION

I bet that if humans discover another planet that is inhabitable by humans, we will attempt to take over the planet, conquering and subjugating any life forms there. Then, we will begin to mercilessly exploit the planet ... in the name of bringing them civilization and democracy.



**A GOOD PRIEST - REST IN PEACE**

In Brazil, Dom Helder Camera has died. Helder Camera insisted the church must serve the needs of the poor first, that poverty was violence against the poor, that the kingdom of heaven must be constructed here and now. He said: "If I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. If I ask why there are poor, they call me a communist."

**LIES ABOUT "FAILED STATES"**

The *New York Times* reports: "Some countries work, some don't. This one [Nicaragua] doesn't." The *New York Times* does not report why Nicaragua doesn't work, does not report how the U.S. supported terrorist dictatorships and the Contras for over four decades and contributed to the killings of over 100,000 people. Nicaragua is a crushed state.

**THE "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY" IS BUSY IN INDONESIA**

In the *Globe and Mail*, Marcus Gee writes that the "international community was enraged by the backlash [in East Timor] and rallied to rescue the minority." (October 4, 1999).

Gee does not report that for decades, the "international community" (including Canada, the U.S., Europe - and a host of our companies and banks) invested in, backed and benefited from relations with the Indonesian military regimes that killed hundreds of thousands of East Timorese.

In the *New York Times*, John Roosa (September 15, 1999) asks "why did we act so slowly on the pogrom [in East Timor]?" ... and does not answer his own question.

It is not that we reacted slowly to the atrocities being committed by the Indonesian army in East Timor. The "international community" was very busy there - training, arming, funding and supporting the Indonesian armed forces.

**MADE IN THE U.S.A.**

"How sad it is to be here (in Washington DC) reading in the news

that in Honduras, U.S.-trained troops opened fire on October 12th protesters with M-16 guns that are produced somewhere around here." (Bertha Caceres, Honduran human rights activist)

**BREAKING NEWS ABOUT THE TUKSONG-DONG FOOTBRIDGE**

Newspapers report on how invading U.S. forces targeted civilians in Korea ... 50 years ago. The Tuksong-dong footbridge hangs 680 feet over a gorge. Picture it full of Korean children, men and women, and ox carts, fleeing the war - between North Korea, South Korea, the U.S., Canada ...

Pre-rigged with explosives, U.S. Marines blow-up the bridge. "It lifted up, and turned sideways, and it was full of refugees end to end". Now, picture the hundreds of Korean poor farmers and children ... Back in North America, we waited a long time for this news about the war against "communists".

**NUMBERS THAT DEFINE US**

(*New York Times*, December 26, 1999)

In 1989, there were 2,000,000 millionaires in the U.S.  
In 1999, there are 8,000,000 millionaires in the U.S.

Photo: A well-coiffured pooch sitting in the back of a limousine. A couple in Southampton fly their palm trees to Palm Beach in the winter. Anastasia keeps her salon open 24/7 to trim the eyelashes of the rich. Some people fly their linen to Paris to be dry-cleaned.

"How much does it take to live properly" per month?

houseman, \$6,250  
jet on call, \$80,000  
dry cleaning, \$3,000  
landscaping, \$20,000  
driver, \$5,400  
social secretary, \$6,000  
flowers, \$2,000  
dog care, \$1,000  
Total: \$123,650

### **BREAKING NEWS ABOUT A CAVE NEAR YOUNGCHOON**

In a cave in Korea, at a place called Youngchoon, U.S. Marines blew up 300 farmers. In a storage house in the village of Doon-Po, 300 more Korean civilians ... . Fifty years later, our media is keeping us informed as to the progress of the fight against "communists", in defense of freedom and democracy.



## **2000: "The Elephant in the Room"**

### **THE MOST BOMBED AREA**

"I am just back from the Plain of Jars, Laos' Stonehenge, actually more like their Easter Island. The Plain of Jars is eerie because it is the most bombed area in the history of mankind.

"The C.I.A. had their staging base only a few kilometers away, in a town called Long Tieng. Even though the C.I.A. base was the second biggest city in Laos at the time, it didn't officially exist.

"The villagers are amazing. They have used all the spent ordnance as building supplies, e.g. bomb casings shore up houses." (Email from Scott Murray, in Thailand)

### **THE ESSENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WORK**

In all ages and cultures, people walk softly by where loved ones sleep – the aging, young, sick, and the well – and if necessary softly tuck them in against the temperatures and vagaries of night.

### **SUPER "PROGRESS"**

In its annual assessment of "progress" across the globe, the United Nations 2000 Human Development Report finds the super-rich are getting super richer, are living super longer. The top billionaires had a combined wealth of \$1,135 billion last year, up \$100 billion from the previous year. In the top 30 countries, life expectancy is more than 75 years. In sub-Saharan Africa, it is 48.9 years, falling to 39.1 years in Malawi and 37.9 in Sierra Leone.



**MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY - JANUARY 15**

Late night, well bundled, I walk from my Washington DC office, past a black man asleep on a bench, on a bitter cold night.

**THE GREATEST KILLER - CODE Z59.5****The World Health Report, 1995, Executive Summary reports:**

"The world's biggest killer, and the greatest cause of ill-health and suffering across the globe, is listed almost at the end of the International Classification of Diseases. It is given the code Z59.5 - extreme poverty.

"Poverty is the main reason why babies are not vaccinated, why clean water and sanitation are not provided, why curative drugs and other treatments are unavailable and why mothers die in childbirth. It is the underlying cause of reduced life expectancy, handicap, disability and starvation. Poverty is a major contributor to mental illness, stress, suicide, family disintegration and substance abuse.

"Every year in the developing world, 12.2 million children under 5 years die, most of them from causes which could be prevented for just a few U.S. cents per child. They die largely because of world indifference, but most of all they die because they are poor ... The gaps between rich and poor, between one population group and another, between ages and between sexes, are widening.

"For many, the prospect of longer life may seem more like a punishment than a gift. Yet by the end of the century we could be living in a world without poliomyelitis, a world without new cases of leprosy, a world without deaths from neonatal tetanus and measles. But today the money that some developing countries have to spend per person on health care over an entire year is just US \$4 - less than the amount of small change carried in the pockets and purses of many people in the developed countries.

"A person in one of the least developed countries in the world has a life expectancy of 43 years, according to 1993 calculations. A person in one of the most developed countries has a life expectancy of 78 - a difference of more than a third of a century. This means a rich, healthy man can live twice as long as a poor, sick man.

"That inequity alone should stir the conscience of the world - but in some of the poorest countries the life expectancy picture is getting worse. In the richest countries life expectancy in the year 2000 will reach 79 years. In some of the poorest it will go backwards to 42 years. Thus the gap continues to widen between rich and poor ...

"In the space of a day, passengers flying from Japan to Uganda, leave the country with the world's highest life expectancy - almost 79 years - and land in one with the world's lowest - barely 42 years. A day away by plane, but half a lifetime's difference on the ground."

Nowhere in this report, or any *World Health Report*, can you find an analysis of how the global "development" economic order is the cause of these vast and extraordinary inequalities and injustices.

**TOURISTS "COMING IN LIKE THE WAVES"**

On the north shore of Honduras, Ermilinda, a Garifuna indigenous woman, tells us how outsiders "are now coming in like the waves", trying by hook, crook or violence, to buy their beachfront lands.

Tourism, the "invisible hand" of "development", is crushing communities, the environment, families and their loves and sorrows.

"At 3am, the rich crooks came with bulldozers and destroyed 500 coconut trees, including a red apple tree planted by my great grandfather, one of the founders of the community. ...

"One day they waked me to say that the same rich crooks had put a fence around a part of OUR beach. Well, we marched down there and took that fence down right away."

**"THANKS TO GOD"**

The region of Honduras that has the highest rates of child death by diarrhea is called *Gracias a Dios* (Thanks to God).

**A CAPABLE DIPLOMAT**

"It would be nice to see the continent of Africa get to the 19th

Century, but realistically it's going to take another century," (*Washington Post*, January 16, 2000)

This statement - racist, condescending, hypocritical - was said by a U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in several African countries. Probably a loving family man, this diplomat may have helped overthrow several good governments, prop up several repressive regimes, and impose brutal I.M.F. "structural adjustment" economic policies all at the same time.

### NECESSARY DELUSIONS

Full page article in the *Globe and Mail* (February 26, 2000) about the woes of the wealthy: "Going Broke on \$300,000 a year."

### 15 SECONDS TO CLEANSE THE SOUL

A 15-second *National Public Radio* news brief: "Pope John Paul II apologized today to people who suffered, over the centuries, from Catholics: women, ethnic groups, Jews, and others."

Fifteen seconds is not a lot of time to say sorry for the deaths of millions of Indigenous people of the Americas; millions of Africans, captured and sold into slavery, killed and brutalized on the way. ... Now, on to other news ...

### GLOBAL PYRAMID SCHEME

In 1999, the Gannett Company paid Chairman John Curley \$1 million salary, \$2 million in bonuses and \$6.9 million in stock options.

### THINGS WE ARE FORCED TO DO

The *Washington Post* (March 15, 2000) reports that the U.S. and NATO might have to fly over the former Yugoslavia and bomb Albanians in Kosovo.

Wait! Were we not just bombing the Serbs on behalf of the Albanians in Kosovo? Oh well.

### THE HUNGER OF ALL THE TIME IN A BOY'S EYES

Eating chicken at a roadside diner in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, a man and boy pass by. The boy just stares at me eating. Lucas, my 3-year old son, stares at people, but his eyes do not show the hunger of all the time.

### THE GOOD AND BAD TIMES OF WAR AND POVERTY

Bordering Nicaragua, the city of Choluteca (Honduras) was hopping in the 1980s when the U.S. government created, financed, armed and trained the Contra terrorist group to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. Years later, sitting in Hotel La Fuente, I imagine C.I.A. agents, Contra leaders and military officials from the United States, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador planning terror and destruction here, while drinking *Cuba Libres* served by underpaid young women in mini-skirts, during the heady days of war, terror and profits.

Business in hotels, restaurants, bars, prostitution and illegal drugs slowed as direct U.S. interventions in Central America died down ... until Hurricane Mitch ripped through Honduras and Nicaragua, killing and disappearing 30,000, leaving tens of thousand homeless. Then "development" workers and "aid" officials poured into the region to plan disaster relief and poverty "alleviation", while sipping *Cuba Libres*.

### (NEVER) TO DO LISTS

Not posted on refrigerators that they don't have, the poor don't make "To Do" lists of things they can't buy:

- dolls and balls for boys and girls,
- housing,
- health and education services,
- food,
- water,
- jobs,
- justice,
- political participation,
- parks to play in,
- free time.



**THE "STARS" WE NEVER SEE**

Picture Tom Cruise or Madonna walking through an airport — the crowds, the cameras flashing, the pushing and shoving.

Picture Carlos Chen walking through the same airport. Carlos would slip by, unnoticed, except maybe by immigration officials wondering if he is "illegally" entering the United States or Canada.

In 1982, most of Carlos' family, cousins and Mayan-Achi community of Rio Negro were massacred by the Guatemala regime. After their eradication, he barely survived 5 years in the mountains; other massacre survivors died of starvation and disease.

Since 1992, Carlos has been rebuilding his life and the lives of the survivors of his community. In his home region of Rabinal, he works to locate the mass graves and have them exhumed by forensic anthropologists; he works to give a decent burial to the dead.

Never to appear at the Oscars, or on the cover of People magazine, Carlos is a real star. How many real stars have you not seen today walking down the street?

**SOUNDS** (March 31, 2000)

In La Ceiba, Honduras, the Caribbean Sea is dark and choppy.  
There ain't no sound like the sea.  
There ain't no sound like your child screaming "Daddy, Daddy".  
There ain't no sound like the bomb going off under your feet.  
There ain't no sound like the cry of need in a poverty-ravaged barrio.  
There ain't no sound like the sea.

**"WHAT WOULD LIFE BE LIKE WITHOUT VACATIONS?"**

In the San Pedro de Sula airport, products for sale are "from the USA", including "Rough Rider studded condoms". "What would life be like without Vacations?" asks a Visa card ad, reminding a majority of Hondurans they will never have chance to travel.

**RECOUNTING THE STORY OF RABINAL**

In a foundation meeting in Washington DC, Carlos Chen talks of

the suffering and survival of his Maya-Achi people in Rabinal. He talks of machetes and massacres, of digging up mass graves, of efforts to seek justice in a country of impunity, of community rebuilding and carpentry workshops, of World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank-funded dams, of repression and forced relocations, of scholarships for orphans and women's micro-loan funds.

For a few seconds, he stops. I think he is remembering the machetes and massacres, his family (2 kids, pregnant wife) and village mowed down ... then he goes on, another meeting, another petition, telling the story of Rabinal.

**THE TRUTH FINALLY BECOMES TRUTH**

"A decade ago, the U.S. went to war [with Iraq] partly to stabilize a major oil producing region," says Republican Senator Paul Coverdell. (April 19, 2000, *Washington Post*)

This is what "radical", "anti-American", "leftist" protesters were saying 10 years ago, before U.S. carpet-bombing began in Iraq, in the name of democracy and freedom.

**NEWSPAPER FILLER**

On the bottom of page 7 of the sports section (*Globe and Mail*, May 5, 2000), under the Weather Report, beside a major article about "Pistol" Pete Sampras coming to play tennis in Toronto, one finds a 3-inch article about people starving to death in the Baluchistan province of southwestern Pakistan. Why even bother to print this information?

**HUMAN RIGHTS WORK**

Running on a full tank, sparkplugs clean, oil changed, carburetor ready and ... but, you can only redline so long before you have to stop and cry.

**GRADUATION DAY**

Watching my daughter Camila graduate from grade one,

hundreds of kids performing, smiling faces all around ...  
 How many lovely kids aren't graduating today  
 from a school they never went to  
 in a Ministry of Education building that doesn't exist  
 having not learned to read and write on blackboards that aren't  
 there  
 never having stuck on the wall drawings of plants, monkeys or  
 spaceships  
 because they were in the fields  
 or sewing 14 hours-a-day in sweat shops  
 or servicing in the brothels  
 or already dead of malnutrition?

#### EXPLOITATION AND POVERTY ARE "ASSETS"

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Toronto Star*)

In the House of Commons Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canadian politicians discussed whether a "free" trade agreement (FTAA - Free Trade Area of the Americas) is the place to include binding rules on human rights and the environment. (June 15, 2000)

Pierre Pettigrew, International Trade Minister, argued no: Imposing high labor standards on countries of Latin America would be unfair: "Can we deprive countries of South America of one of their assets, which is cheap labor?"

Stop.

Canada's top foreign trade official demonstrates the chasms of understanding and hypocrisy between rich people and countries and poor people and countries. Pettigrew is saying: Poverty and exploitation – the very conditions of cheap labor – are assets.

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"For the oppressors, what is worthwhile is to have more — always more —

even at the cost of the oppressed having less, or having nothing.

For them, to be is to have and to be the class of the 'haves.'"

(Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)

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#### ONE PERSON, TWO LIVES

Denese Becker returned home to the Mayan-Achi village of Rio Negro, Guatemala, for the first time in 18 years.

In 1982, then a 9-year-old Mayan Achi girl named Dominga Sic Ruiz, she escaped the massacres, fleeing into the mountains with her infant sister strapped to her shoulder, losing her entire family, most of her community and much of her memory.

Alone, in the mountains, Dominga recalls squeezing wild berry juice into the mouth of her infant sister, to get her to drink. Her infant sister died of malnutrition.

Two years later, orphan Dominga was adopted by a family in the U.S. – the country that supported the regimes carrying out the massacres – and left for Iowa.

In a press conference: "I came to Guatemala because I am looking for family; I want to learn about my past; I am seeking peace in my heart; and, I'm looking for my heritage for the sake of my children."

#### HONDURAS: THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

In 2000, I spent two-months in Honduras working on poverty related issues. Working for an international development NGO, I took a concentrated look at the poverty of Honduras as the result of systemic and predictable violations of many human rights. The "elephant" in the room is the unjust global economic-development model that benefits the very people, institutions and countries that then come and offer "solutions."

#### THE POVERTY OF HONDURAS NO ONE CREATED

There is good news but actually more bad news in Honduras.

The good news: Every government and "development" institution you can name laments poverty.



The bad news: Most of these governments and institutions have stakes in how the economic development system unjustly distributes wealth and poverty across the planet.

Moral of the "international community": lament poverty, but don't ask why there is poverty in order to bring about changes necessary to end it.

### MORE STUDIES, NO CHANGE

The government of Honduras has presented a "Preliminary Diagnosis on Poverty" that sets out a "Strategy to Combat Poverty". Prepared by cabinet ministers, Congress members and "participants from Civil Society", the Strategy aims at a "sustainable and equitable development model, where the human being is the main goal of the society." The Strategy will "establish a series of policies, measures, programs and projects that attack the symptoms and the roots of poverty ... recognizing that this is not an easy task."

Hallelujah! There it is, at last, a commitment not to put band-aids on the suffering of the poor, but to attack the root causes of poverty. The time of equality and justice is near.

Not!

The "development" strategy of the Honduran government is to implement IMF (International Monetary Fund) structural adjustment programs. Wealthy governments force Honduras to keep paying its unjust foreign debt, which has already been paid 1.5 times, even as the principal builds.

The Honduras government agrees to dedicate ever more of the country's best land to export products to northern breakfast tables. (*elHeraldo* newspaper, March 21, 2000)

### HUNGER IN PATUCA ... THAT NO ONE CREATED

On the same page of the same newspaper on the same day (*elHeraldo*, March 21, 2000) that the Honduran government announced its "Strategy to Combat Poverty", a headline reads: "10,000 citizens from Patuca facing hunger crisis."

The United Nation's World Food Program is sending an emergency shipment of 123 tons of food to 18 communities in the municipalities of Wampusirpe and Ahuás, in the department of Gracias a Dios (Thanks to God). Families along the Patuca River are the intended recipients.

The Canadian government (proponent of "free" trade and I.M.F. structural adjustment programs, unjust debt payment and using ever more land for export products) provides – with ample media coverage – \$50,000 for the shipment of emergency foods.

This food "aid" comes from government subsidized production in North America and the European Community. The beans and rice that get shipped in could easily be produced in the fertile lands of Honduras ... except that the fertile lands in Honduras are owned by wealthy Hondurans and foreigners who produce bananas, pineapple, African palm trees, etc., for export to northern markets!

Once the emergency foods arrive,  
the poor won't be hungry,  
until they run out of emergency foods,  
and then they will be hungry ...  
and the best lands in the country will still be used for export crops,  
and the UN and other relief organizations will still ask for donations  
to "feed the poor".

### RIGHT TO (BUY) HEALTH

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund demand the privatization of parts of the IHSS (Honduran Institute of Social Security) "if Honduras wants to attract international investment."

The IHSS has suspended lab examinations and X-rays; there are only 15 days of medicine in storage; 80% of the equipment is old or in bad condition. (*elHeraldo*, March 21-22, 2000)

The impoverished majority will now have to pay for health services with money they don't have.

### FROM REPORT TO DENIAL TO REPORT TO DENIAL

Another report – this one by the Ministry of Employment, the Honduran Institute of Children and Family and UNICEF (UN Fund

for the Protection of Children) – concludes 2,000,000 children and adolescents in Honduras live in poverty.

In one month, children 10-14 years old earn 100-500 Lempiras (US\$7-35). Some of what they produce (shoes, clothing) ends up in "first" world stores. (*elHeraldo*, March 21, 2000)

The study makes no connection between widespread, endemic poverty and working in sweat-shops to export goods to U.S. and Canadian consumers.

### THE REAL CRIMES

The Ministry of Security is legalizing armed civilian vigilante groups in Honduras "because there is so much crime".

Along the Caribbean coast, leaders of COPA (Coordinator of Popular Organizations of Aguan) receive death threats from armed civilian groups, possibly hired by land-owner Miguel Facusse, uncle of the President of Honduras.

COPA defends the land rights of the Garifuna population and protects the environment from illegal logging. Armed men attack Garifuna communities, burning the homes and killing a few people. (*El Tiempo*, March 13, 2000)

These are not crimes the Ministry of Security is concerned about.

### ... AND DESPITE IT ALL, I SEE ...

the anger and tension of the well-manicured man, driving an urban Ranger, cell phone in hand, not seeing the people of the street, and hating them anyway ...  
and the toothless smile on the wrinkled face of the poorest of poor old women, carrying a huge bucket of water along the road.

### THE U.S. WILL ALSO HELP FIGHT POVERTY

The director of the U.S. Agency for International Development announced that USAID will provide \$400 million dollars to finance programs to fight poverty. (Some of these funds have already been spent to help the government design its Strategy to Combat

Poverty!)

The director warned: "It won't be easy to reduce the levels of poverty. Nevertheless, once the underlying problems and causes of poverty have been identified, it would be easier to achieve higher levels of development."

Hallelujah! There it is, a commitment to attack the "underlying problems and causes of poverty" ... Not.

In denial about the inherent injustices and inequalities of the global economic model, the director went on to say that "a program would be initiated to support those sectors of Honduras that produce cantaloupe, watermelon, bananas and platanos for export."

Using ever more of the best arable lands to export ever more crops will not help the ever more poor majority. This "development" will help the minority landowners, plus "first" world consumers enjoying fresh fruit at "affordable" prices. (*elHeraldo*, March 25, 2000)

### WHEN KILLING IS NOT ENOUGH

Human rights and union activist Jairo Ayala is dead. But not just killed, first he was tortured and dismembered.

Recently, Jairo had brought a complaint to CODEH (Committee for Human Rights in Honduras) against members of the Ministry of Security, alleging they made death threats against him.

To dismember someone is to say to other human rights and union activists, and to the public, that they too might be captured, and have their genitals cut out, like Jairo Ayala, before being assassinated and dumped in a public place. (*El Tiempo*, February 12, 2000)

### TRICKLE DOWN TUBERCULOSIS

"The situation of Tuberculosis is serious in Honduras," conclude experts from the Pan American Health Organization, US-AID and the Honduran government on the International Day of Tuberculosis.



Way down in the article (*elHeraldo*, March 25, 2000): "This disease is closely related to the person's conditions of life, such as guaranteed access to potable water and a daily nutritious diet, and to health services if necessary."

### TRICKLE DOWN LEISHMANIASIS

In the past three months, the government has detected at least 600 cases of Leishmaniasis that comes from the Leishmania parasite, transmitted via mosquitos. It attacks all ages, particularly children under 5, producing fevers, loss of appetite and weight, and increasing the size of the kidney. Fatal stuff, without treatment.

Prevention of Leishmaniasis is based on having clean living conditions, where mosquitos don't breed, and access to potable water and a nutritious daily diet. Most cases of Leishmaniasis have been detected in the region of Olancho, an impoverished region of the country. (*elHeraldo*, 25 March 2000)

But, don't say the "p" word (poverty); don't use the "unjust economic model" phrase.

### AN ANTI-POVERTY PARTY

This time it is the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) hosting an anti-poverty party. From across the Americas, politicians and business "leaders" check into posh hotels in New Orleans.

Carlos Flores Facusse, President of Honduras and member of the country's largest land-holding family, gave a presentation on how best to respond to "natural disasters" -- in reference to Hurricane Mitch.

Drawing attention away from the unjust economic-development model, long supported by international "development" institutions that are here in New Orleans and his land-monopolizing family, Flores declares: "No country in the world, even the rich ones, can ever be prepared to deal with such an enormous tragedy that was Hurricane Mitch."

The media eats it up. They fail to report that the biggest killer was not the rains, nor the floods and mudslides of Hurricane Mitch, but the preceding conditions of exploitation, poverty and vulnerability

in which most Hondurans live.

The mudslides occur on steep hill and mountainsides where the poor are forced to move to, after being displaced from their home communities by State repression and wealthy land-owners who want their lands to grow food for export.

The black ties and high heels gathered in New Orleans will not say that the real "disaster" is the economic development model that distributes wealth to northern countries and the wealthy sectors in poor countries; and distributes poverty, vulnerability and despair south and to the poor sectors in wealthy countries.

### "A MORAL INSULT"

Michael Camdessus, head of the International Monetary Fund, is in New Orleans: "Poverty represents the true threat to the stability of a globalized world. The gap between rich and poor countries has increased, and this is a moral insult, and it is a loss of economic opportunity that leads us to problems of social explosions."

Applause aplenty ... and no questions about how this "moral insult" is a direct result of and grew enormously during Michael's tenure at the I.M.F. and the worldwide implementation of structural adjustment programs that are implemented along with "free trade" agreements.

### SAINTS AND COMMUNISTS

"If I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. If I ask why there are poor, they call me a communist." (Helder Camera, Brazilian priest)

### RIGHT TO WATER ... ON THE "FREE TRADE" MARKET

As you turn on your tap, hot and cold, for baths and dishes, to brush your teeth or wash the floor, clean a cut or make some tea, make some ice or fill a water balloon ... half a million people in Tegucigalpa have no access to potable water.

In poor neighborhoods, a family pays 10-20 lempiras (\$1.50) for a small container of water but most people don't earn \$1.50 a day.

The poor pay more for what little water they can buy in plastic jugs "on the free market" in their hard-to-get to barrios, than the wealthy folks pay for water that gets delivered into their hot water tanks and jacuzzis ...

Meanwhile, the National Water Service (SANAA) is collapsing and ... a water privatization plan exists. A bill is before Congress that will drive the price of water up. (*elHeraldo*, March 27, 2000)

### AND FROM THE OASIS, WE SHALL BUILD A DESERT

"Honduras is a half-step away from creating a desert in its territory." (*elHeraldo* headline, March 27, 2000) "The poor cut trees to bring home loads of firewood on their backs, to cook their [paltry amounts of] food".

The article does not explain how the poor were forced to move to over-crowded cities when their lands were forcibly taken from them to produce food for exports. The article does not mention the corruption in COHDEFOR (Honduran Government Corporation of Forestry Development) and how landowners and the military illegally cut forests for export to northern markets or for luxury homes of their own.

### THE "ENORMOUS SOCIAL EXPLOSIONS" OF EVERY DAY

Now, it is Madeleine Albright's turn. The U.S. Secretary of State has also come to New Orleans to argue that poverty must be on the agenda of every international agency. If not attended to, "there might be an enormous social explosion."

Might be?

Her concern is the "social explosion" when people protest, throw rocks, even rise up in armed rebellion. Her concern is not the "enormous social explosions" that happen everyday, across the planet, in huts and lean-tos, when children and infants are killed by a million causes related to poverty, in the quiet of their shacks, beyond the tracks, that Albright has rarely crossed, except perhaps to inaugurate a water pump, posing before cameras.

### GRAFFITI

"I was hungry and you formed a committee."

### NAIL IN THE COFFIN

On the last day of the "development" meetings in New Orleans, the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) concludes that more funds will be destined for Central America to open the countries to more foreign investment that will strengthen the "free trade" economic model that has created more exploitation and poverty than any Hurricane Mitch every will.

### PRE-MITCH, POST-MITCH, PERMA-MITCH SYNDROME

In San Pedro Sula, police and security forces used tear gas and violence to remove hundreds of victims of Hurricane Mitch from a property where they were trying to rebuild their lives because they never received post-hurricane support. 12 injured, 120 detained for "illegal meetings that violate the internal security of Honduras".

To live in and die from poverty is not a crime, but to protest poverty violates "national security".

### "FOOD SECURITY"

A U.N. World Food Program study concluded that Honduras' food deficit will increase from 200,000 tons of food in 2000 to 500,000 tons in 2005. "Nevertheless, the international community of donors will continue with its policies of giving food products to the poor in exchange for work, while promoting the diversification of producing foods for export".

A summary of the "food security" plan:

Rich countries send subsidized surplus foods to the poor in Honduras. These are foods over-produced in the north and subsidized by northern governments. Some of these foods are genetically engineered.

These subsidized imports from the north undermine local markets and production in the country of the south.



As a reward for being poor, the poor must work on public projects (road-construction, for example) in exchange for a bag of food, no income.

Meanwhile, the northern governments continue to pressure Honduras to use more and more of its best lands to produce food products for export to northern markets. (*Prensa Libre*, April 1, 2000)

### THE TRICK(LE)

Not to be left out, the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) opines that "bad administration is an obstacle to sustainable initiatives to end poverty". (*elHeraldo*, April 5, 2000; *Miami Herald*, April 5, 2000)

The UNDP puts "good governance" at the top of their list of obstacles to poverty alleviation. "Without good governance, reliance on trickle-down economic development ... will not work".

Crystal clear: Even the U.N. promotes the lie that "trickle-down economic development" is the correct model. "Good" governments enable vast wealth accumulation at the top of the pyramid scheme.

No discussion of how wealth flows up the rich sectors and countries, and poverty down; nor of where bad governments came from. No mention that the U.S. gave over 1 billion dollars of military support into the coffers of bad Central American military governments in the 1980s alone. No mention of the billions of dollars in "development" aid that the World Bank, IDB and the UN pumped into the coffers and private accounts of many bad governments over the past 50 years.

### ALMS FOR THE POOR

The program *Un Vaso de Leche* (A Cup of Milk) is supported by the Association of Diplomatic Wives, embassies of the rich countries and the business community of Honduras. The well-heeled attend the inauguration of this year's program.

In Tegucigalpa, 20,000 primary school students will receive ("until funds run out") a cup of milk and a cookie. The program offers

a "de-parasiting" service for children who live in exploitation and poverty, where parasites prosper.

The Vaso de Leche program was initiated because children come to school hungry, faint or fall asleep in class, before being revived and going home hungry. Now, they will go home hungry, but perhaps won't have fainted in class. Total cost: 1.5 tempira (10 cents) a day per student.

Each cup of milk and cookie are needed by the students and ... this program will do nothing to change the reasons why these children will grow up to be poor adults, underpaid for working too hard - possibly for the people, institutions and countries "donating" money for the Vaso de Leche project - to then have their own children, in conditions of poverty, get parasites.

### COMPARATIVE STARVATIONS

Worldwatch Institute reports that every year close to 20,000,000 people die of malnutrition and starvation and 1.2 billion human beings are chronically underfed and malnourished.

Worldwatch also reports that 500,000 U.S. citizens spend \$10 billion annually on liposuction procedures.

### INTENSIVE CARE AND INTENSIVE EXPLOITATION

80% of all malnourished and starving children live in countries that produce food surpluses!

The best lands of Honduras are owned by the oligarchy and U.S.-based companies that pay workers \$2 a day, or so, to export foods to rich countries. (*Honduras This Week*, March 4, 2000)

Had these malnourished babies been born in the U.S. or Canada, most would immediately be put in intensive care; social workers would be activated to assess the abilities of the parents ...

### THE CUP IS 5% FULL - in Honduras

18 years after he disappeared, tortured and murdered Nelson Mackay, Colonel Manuel de Jesus Trejo Rosa, of the Honduran

military, is finally in a [comfortable military] jail. This is one of the first times an "intellectual author" of the U.S.-backed repression of the 1980s has gone to jail. (*elHeraldo*, April 4, 2000)

- Normally the cup of justice is 95% empty; today it is 5% full.

### BOMBS, GUNS AND ATTACK HELICOPTERS FOR ... DEMOCRACY

- The U.S. Senate and Congress passed a \$1.3 billion "aid" package to the government of Colombia.

The U.S. government will pay U.S. companies hundreds of millions of dollars to produce helicopters, machine guns and bombs, to be sold to the Colombia military and paramilitaries.

This "aid" package will "strengthen the oldest democracy in America," intones President Clinton.

### THE NAMELESS - IN MANY PLACES

58 people suffocate trying to "illegally" enter England from Belgium. Any family members they might have in either country will not come forward to identify their bodies for fear of being arrested themselves.

### HOW TO DEAL WITH POVERTY? - RE-DEFINE IT

In Geneva, the General Assembly of the United Nations affirms that poverty is increasing. 1.2 billion people survive and die on \$1/day. U.N. experts have set \$1/day as the poverty line! The U.N. sets the goal of halving poverty by the year 2015. In 2016, if you earn \$1.01/day, you will not be living in poverty.

### "LOST SOULS"

In Mishkeegogamang, and other places like it across what is known as Canada, community members call the local drunks and addicts "lost souls", not bums, dumb Indians, etc.

### THE DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM WE ARE TALKING ABOUT

In Union Station, Washington DC, sleek ads adorn the walls. Lockheed, Martin-Boeing Pratt and Whitney announce: "The F-22: For 1% of the Defense Budget we'll have 100% control of the skies."

### THE END OF THE PAYATAS GARBAGE DWELLERS

A photo in the news: In Manila, Philippines, a retaining wall collapsed in a garbage dump. Hundreds are killed - toddlers, girls and boys, moms and dads, grandparents. They lived here, in the dump called Payatas. They competed here, with vultures and rats, for the spoils of society, until poorly built walls collapsed on their poorly built huts and lives, leaving them for the vultures and rats.

### DURABLE CLOTHES AND MEMORIES

During an exhumation of a mass grave in Guatemala, a surviving mother might identify the body of her beloved son, daughter, husband or parent, by a piece of non-decomposed clothing that, years before, she would have washed by hand in a river, hundreds of times.

### HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLE - Anywhere

Soccer fields, coaches and goal nets for all!

Ok - not fields, coaches and nets.

Soccer shoes for all!

Ok - not shoes.

How about a ball? And time, so that all children can come, all the time, and run up and down fields, and kick balls.

### PEOPLE I HAVE MET, LIKE CALELI

When I arrived in Central America in 1989 and began work with CODEHUCA (Central American Human Rights Commission), I was most fortunate to meet, work with and live beside Caleli. From Guatemala, Caleli was a street clown, mime artist, computer expert, survivor of torture,



father, son, friend to many, refugee in Canada, ... and first and last, a Guatemalan. I miss him today and am happy to be his friend.

### TIGER AND THE 250,001st VICTIM OF THE GUATEMALAN GENOCIDE

Caleli is dead. Died of a heart attack. Killed by a broken heart, a refugee in Montreal, far from Guatemala.

In 1999, the United Nations reported that the U.S.-backed Guatemalan military regime killed at least 250,000 people. Make that 250,001; at 45, Caleli couldn't go on anymore.

On the front page of every newspaper, I read of Tiger Woods. An ecstatic Canadian media gushes over Tiger's decision to play golf in Canada. I learn that Tiger has been sick recently, Tiger is fatigued, but with great fortitude and determination he is going to come ... and ... play ... golf ... in Canada (for millions of dollars).

Caleli was sick, he was fatigued; a life of war in Guatemala. A three-day weekend in a clandestine military jail – torture. A life as an underpaid, marginalized refugee. Caleli's body was tired and sick. His heart was tired and worn. Caleli died a Guatemalan death, living a Guatemalan life, fighting, miming and laughing for justice. Caleli was a giant of a person, just for surviving ... with a smile and a laugh for the kids.

### A CASKET OF COLOUR FOR CALELI

Caleli had many friends, people touched and improved through laughter. Mirea, Caleli's sister, re-meets Caleli through friends gathered to cry and laugh and tell funny stories.

In front of his casket, the "Grupo Caleli" gang sit inside their beat-up, well-traveled suitcase: dolls flopping over, puppets propped up, hats and dogs, bunnies and cats, a well-worn pair of Groucho Marx glasses.

On top of his casket, friends placed multi-colored pants, Guatemalan shoes, a hundred photos, a thousand poems by and to Caleli. On top, a photo of Caleli, face painted white with a red

plastic nose, smiling.

On his casket was propped the sign he held up to end all his shows - "Fin".

The show was great, Caleli. It went on over 40 years. Ups and downs, much injustice, and amidst it all the smiles and laughter. Were Caleli alive, he would be sad and look morose, until he got tired of seeing so many sad people, and then he would put on a show – make us laugh and smile.

Caleli had asked Mirea that his ashes be spread in Costa Rica, Montreal and the Cuchumatanes mountains of Guatemala. So it shall be.

### BRIGHT FLAMES

Sporting a not friendly face, Poppy came to the door wondering who was knocking on her Montreal door. "Grahame", her eyes lit up, and we hugged. "Come in, and tell me about your friend who died."

Surrounded by her art and memories, we talk of Caleli and Poppy's son Eric, of why the good die young. "Yes, I was thinking yesterday that there was some deep similarity between Caleli and Eric – adversity." Two flames who burned bright.

### A LASTING APPLAUSE

To La Fiesta restaurant came family and friends, activists, lovers and poets, to cry, laugh, read and recount stories of Caleli. One said: "Caleli is in the small gestures; he exuded hope."

On the big screen on the stage, Caleli was alive, miming: The fetus who – upon seeing the state of the world – wanted to return to the womb; the rejected lover who kept failing in her efforts to kill herself; and on and on.

After many spoke, cried and laughed, Hector said: "Let's have a big applause for Caleli, that he may hear us."

**THE U.S. WON THE "VIETNAM WAR"**

In all ways important to the economic and military elites of the United States, in all ways important to millions of Vietnamese killed by the U.S., the U.S. won the "Vietnam" War; Vietnam lost the "American" war.

**WHY IS EVERYONE UPSET WITH AKI RA**

State-subsidized military industries in western nations make billions of dollars producing landmines that blow up limbs and lives across the planet. People down the street and in your little league sports club earn a good living producing these and other deadly items.

Now, people in western countries campaign to demine the "third" world.

In Cambodia, United Nations and NGO "experts" are upset at Aki Ra. Aki was forcibly recruited into the Khmer Rouge at age 5 and taught to maim and kill - in the name of defending or fighting communism. Now, he scrapes along on his hands and knees, removing mines one by one, with a kitchen knife.

In Cambodia, former members of the Khmer Rouge are angry with Aki Ra because he puts all the de-mined mines in a museum he has set up to tell the true history of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia and all the "made in the west" armaments.

**EMAIL FROM ANNIE, GUATEMALA CITY**

"I love this city! Four gunshots just went off in the street and a car sped away. A friend of mine saw someone kidnapped off 6th Avenue, a block from the office, at about 2 in the afternoon."

**CRIMINAL ACTIVITY - IN IRAQ**

"Kathy Kelly and Mark McGuire, having just returned from their 2-month sojourn to Basra, Iraq, held a press conference at the Federal Plaza in downtown Chicago this morning. Upon the completion of the conference, Mark and Kathy were joined by Danny Muller (Voices in the Wilderness, Chicago) and Andrew Mandell (Chicago) and proceeded to the U.S Attorney's office

to ask them to clarify which exactly is "CRIMINAL"?: the hand-made Iraqi fans (made from the nylon sacks used to distribute UN food rations) that Mark and Kathy purchased and brought back from Basra, in this way violating the "UN Economic Sanctions", or 10-years of U.S.-led economic sanctions which have resulted in the deaths of over 1 million Iraqi's?" (Voices in the Wilderness)

**EMAIL FROM ANNIE, GUATEMALA CITY**

"I just heard gunshots. Heard them yesterday, too. Remember that night you called and I had just heard gunshots? They shot someone on the first floor of our building."

**EMAIL FROM ANNIE, GUATEMALA CITY**

"I got to the Ximbaxuc area just in time for a lynching of two community members who were not able to report on expenses related to a community development project. It was very disturbing to sit in the church hearing some of the people who had done the lynching (burned them alive) weeping and asking the family of the victims for forgiveness. There have been a lot of lynchings in Guatemala recently."

**THE SOUND OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

A school-yard or park, full of kids, well fed, playing, with decent houses and communities to go home to.

**A GOOD DAY TO LIVE**

Maria, a Mi'kmaq warrior, stands her ground in the Burnt Church community on New Brunswick's Atlantic coast, demanding native fishing rights. She gives the "two-gun salute" (two middle fingers held high in the air) to Canadian Army helicopters flying constantly overhead. A lot of warriors say, "It's a good day to die." Maria says, "It's a good day to live." (Toronto Star, September 30, 2000)

**MY CHILD**

Every girl and boy



hungry, virused, parasited,  
mined, raped, tortured, shot,  
orphaned, barefoot, hit.

### HOW QUICKLY WE FORGET

Talking of famine, war and earthquakes, slavery, poverty and hurricanes, repression, rape and torture, it is often said "How quickly we forget."

But if we really knew, we couldn't forget.

### A FOREVER OF COLOUR

In the autumn splendor, I stood still, warm in the wind and sun, looking through the space between me and a barn. Brilliant colors engulfed; I was stopped in the space, light and colors. I heard birdsong, a door shut, the wind in the trees, the leaves along the ground.

### THE SIGHT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Swimming classes for all kids!  
How to hold your breath, underwater?  
How to blow bubbles, and not get water up your nose,  
and then get out of the pool, into a warm towel,  
soon after, into a warm home, with no holes in the walls and roof,  
have a good meal,  
sleep in a warm dry bed,  
and get up the next day, and  
do it all again.

### WHO IS ANDRE AUGUSTO

Andre is the only Angolan in the Para-Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. A land-mine victim, black, he was brought up in poverty. He smiles completely, training for the 800-meter event.

Angola would win a gold medal for the total number of landmines in one country that exploded people's legs and lives.  
Angola would be a serious contender for the poorest, most

victimized nation on the planet earth.

And for winning these categories Angola can barely participate in the Para-Olympic games, or any games. Winning at sports is mostly for the rich and powerful.

### WHO IS GREGORIO YUJA XONA

Dead almost 20 years, unknown except to family and friends, massacred by the Guatemalan regime in 1980, Gregorio's story has arisen from his "unmarked grave" and is part of legal cases against the Guatemalan generals.

A witness to and survivor of the 1980 "Spanish Embassy Massacre", Gregorio's burnt body was taken alive to a hospital. The next day, witnesses saw 20 armed men enter the hospital, kidnap and take him away, to disappear him forever ... they thought.

Testimony about his life has returned. May the generals and their "international community" supporters be found as guilty as they are for what they did in Guatemala.

### A DILEMMA ABOUT GUATEMALAN IMPUNITY

In the northern region of Colotendango, the Justice of the Peace has a problem. He will not try and re-detain 12 ex-civil defense patrollers who bust out of jail where they were being held for murder, because they would murder him. They remain free, murdering people.

### DON'T BLINK

Trust me, my friend, don't blink.  
Life is passing by  
like a roaring river,  
like tumbleweed,  
like a slow cloud on a hot rock day.  
But don't blink  
Cuz your time is always almost up.  
Seems so far away,  
the end, death,  
whatever you call it,

but, it is in your next breath,  
 so don't blink  
 and miss your next-to-last breath,  
 Don't blink, saying "oh, I'm so bored",  
 Don't blink, when you fail, or succeed,  
 Or when your dog dies  
 Or your sister is killed  
 by a bomb or a bumble,  
 Don't blink, saying "Oh, it's just another snowfall"  
 or "another lousy rainy day!"  
 Dive in right now  
 to the daily and repetitive  
 to the rare and ephemeral  
 to the tears of joy, sorrow and rage  
 Jump in and bathe all the time in life  
 Because, my family, friends and planet earth,  
 I love it all,  
 and thanks for the trip.



## 2001: Dark Ages

### "CANADA THE GOOD"

After living in Washington DC, 1995-2000, I came to live in Toronto in 2000. Continuing with the same work, I incorporated Rights Action (Canada).

One thing that struck me was the situation of Canada's Indigenous "First Nations" peoples. Though their current situations in Canada are different than the situations of Indigenous people in, say, Guatemala, their histories of racism and oppression are similar in many ways, and the deep misunderstandings between the dominant European descendant sectors are similar. ■

A second thing that struck me is the misleading and often repeated myth of "Canada the good", similar to the myth of the U.S. "the greatest nation."

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"Patriotism is the belief  
 your country is superior to all other countries  
 because you were born in it."  
 (George Bernard Shaw)

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"I'm fed up to the ears  
 with old men dreaming up wars  
 for young men to die in."  
 (George McGovern)



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"Nationalism is a silly cock  
crowing on his own dunghill."

(R. Aldington)

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### "ILLEGAL" HUMANS

A new year, a new photo, an old story. (*New York Times*, January 2, 2001)

An ocean liner broke in half. One half is stuck against a rocky shore, just south of Antalya, Turkey. The other half has gone to the bottom ... with "illegal" migrants in the hold, who had been leaving behind a harsh life of bad work and little pay, or no work, to find a life of hard work and a little more pay ... and they did not even get a decent burial.

Their names will not be reported. Their dreams and hopes were, I am sure, like mine.

### NOT A "TIME BOMB" WAITING TO HAPPEN

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Toronto Star*)

It was sad to read Linda Diebel's article "A Tale of Two Worlds" (January 21), addressing the chasm between the minority wealthy and majority impoverished in Brazil. But this is not a "crisis". It is normal that there are impoverished millions in Brazil.

Diebel quotes John Foster that the situation in Latin America is a "time bomb." But the time is all the time and the bomb explodes every day: no food and potable water; no land or only bad land; no work or only work with misery wages; no access to decent education, health and housing.

The article leaves us to lament the situation of the poor, without understanding why there are impoverished people and how the economic model ties us all together, inside nations and between.

### WALKING CHIAPAS

The bus to San Cristobal de las Casas rolls by her, and millions

more. The barefoot Mayan woman carries firewood on her back, strap taut around her forehead. Sitting on top, an infant child hangs on, a long, hard life ahead.

### THE HONORABLE ONES OF YIBELJOJ

At the end of a military-controlled paved road, winding through the mountains of Chenalho (Chiapas, Mexico);  
at the end of a military-controlled dirt road;  
at the end of a foot path, winding past the homes of para-military men;  
here, the people of Yibejoj received me into their community of loss, survival, resistance and heart:

*Ciudadano Graham* (citizen Grahame) they say, before the gathered community of Mayan-Tzotzil survivors of repression, "thank-you for your support so that we could return home." (Months ago killing and repression drove them from this, their home community.)

I was in the right place, at the right time, doing the least of things, yet they, the honorable ones, thank me. On this earth, in the mountains of Chenalho, I joined a ceremony of Mayan people, oppressed, surviving and vibrant, to bless the earth, water and trees, to thank friends and support that have come from close and afar.

They tell me their next project is to build a second exit from the community, so that if the *Mascara Roja* (Red Mask) paramilitaries attack them again they will be able to escape.

### MEMO TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA: THERE IS NO "THIRD WORLD"

Adrienne Clarkson, Canada's Governor General, travelled to Davis Inlet, a place that had its own name before the onslaught of European expansionism. Clarkson is there to draw attention to the situation of the Innu people. She decries their "third-world" conditions of poverty, suicide rates and discrimination.

Memo (January 24): Dear Governor General, there is no "third world". There is only one world. Humans create and distribute wealth and poverty, racism and oppression, joy and sadness, in it,

**MEMO TO CANADIANS:****THERE IS NO "NATIVE PROBLEM"**

(Unpublished Letter to Editor of the *Globe and Mail*)

Margaret Wente ("Finally, we're talking about FAS", February 1, 2001) has helpfully drawn attention to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) that poisons babies and destroys lives across the country, particularly amongst the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

However, Wente wrongly claims that the "issue (of FAS) is not on the radar screen of native leaders." Health workers and parents (mainly Indigenous mothers) across the country are working under next to impossible conditions to address and remedy endemic alcoholism and its deadly impacts on their young.

Wente turns a blind eye to history. First Nations "North Americans" didn't wake up one day and decide to poison their future generations by getting hooked on booze, to have the highest rates of infant mortality, illiteracy, imprisonment, homelessness, suicide, etc. There is a history of conquest, dispossession and ethnocide.

Yes, Indigenous peoples have to take responsibility for themselves. They have no choice, and they are working harder at resolving their issues than Wente admits. However, the hardest challenge is for the non-Indigenous Canadians – particularly of English and French descent – to understand there is no such thing as a "Native Problem" in Canada. There is an "English/French/Indigenous" problem.

**SYNDROMES:****RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND CANADA THE GOOD**

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Globe and Mail*)

Thank you for publishing Peter Gzowski's "Residential Schools: Money Alone Is No Answer". Gzowski addresses an issue usually ignored by non-Indigenous commentators, politicians, journalists and assorted experts: that the "Native problem" is systemic in nature; that it is a problem that involves the non-Indigenous.

In fact, it is not a "Native problem". It is a Canadian problem. It is about the "harm we've done" to them, Gzowski writes.

Critiquing his own thinking and values (a quality rare amongst

politicians, "experts" and journalists). Gzowski examines the thinking and role of the "normal" Canadian citizen. What is the role and responsibility of "normal" Canadians, who did not commit individual crimes against Native people, but who – as non-Native citizens – participated in and possibly benefitted from the systemic harms and crimes against Native people?

Gzowski takes the discussion away from that of what we "normal" Canadians can do to help "them" Native Canadians, towards a discussion about all of us. How have we non-Natives been able to sit by and watch, while our way of life – politically, economically, culturally – has so severely dispossessed Native Canadians?

**PEACE OF MIND**

Finally, it is confirmed (February 17, *Toronto Star*): the Chilean Army threw Victor Diaz, 24, into the sea on May 12, 1976. 25 years later, his daughter Viviana asks: "How did he get into the sea? Was he alive or dead? Was he thrown out of a boat, a helicopter or a plane? I need to have these answers, to have some peace of mind."

**A DAILY PUBLIC FLOGGING IN THE GLOBAL TOWN SQUARE**

Yesterday, the U.S. and Britain dropped bombs on the other side of the planet, killing Iraqi citizens. The number of dead is not known. No questions are being asked in the House of Lords, Congress or Canadian Parliament.

A U.S. government spokesperson (February 17, *Toronto Star*): "Our intention is to make sure the world is as peaceful as possible."

A Pentagon official: The attack was "essentially in self-defense." Senator Jeff Sessions: "It is just as well that [Saddam] Hussein knows right up front that President Bush is not going to be pushed around."

The daily bombing of Iraq is like a public flogging that takes place every day, in every town square of every city and community across North America and Britain. Citizens can watch it on NBC, CBC, ABC, CNN, MTV, etc. with silent horror, or voiced approval, or go about our business unaware, as "elected leaders" order the killing of Iraqi people in the name of our well-being.



**HOW DO YOU SPELL C-O-M-P-L-I-C-I-T-Y**

A *Toronto Star* editorial: "As Prime Minister Chretien correctly pointed out, Saddam [Hussein, leader of Iraq] invited the attack by violating ceasefire conditions."

And in other news:

- women invite men to rape them by wearing mini-skirts;
- Dudley George invited getting shot and killed by Ontario Provincial Police, while protesting over an Indigenous burial ground;
- the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki invited ... ;
- Africans invited the Europeans to capture and sell them into slavery and death;
- Mayan people in Guatemala invited the genocide against themselves, in the name of fighting "communism."

**PRESIDENTIAL RITES OF PASSAGE**

(Unpublished Letter to Editors of ... yet another newspaper)

It is like a rite of passage: Incoming U.S. Presidents order the bombing of other countries. For the last three presidents, Iraq has been the country of choice.

Once the bombs have fallen, politicians gravely say: "This was a hard decision", "The President had no choice", "The bombings were in self-defense"; etc.

The February 16th bombings (at least one person dead and 11 wounded, including children) were said to be "in self-defense" because U.S. and British war planes were shot at by Iraqi forces in the "no-fly" zones that cover two-thirds of Iraq's territory.

The "no-fly" zones are an illegal invention of the U.S. and British governments.

Bombing Iraq is a grotesque charade, sometimes joked about on late night TV. The west is choosing the most deadly and immoral way to deal with our differences with Iraq. Iraqi civilians keep on dying, and we keep on violating and undermining the very world we claim we want to live in.

**"CONCERN" FOR KURDS**

(February 25, Letter to Friends)

Dear friends, I write in response to your concerns about what I wrote about bombing Iraq. The concern you raised is that the U.S. and Britain are "protecting the Kurds":

I do not excuse the repression the Iraqi government has carried out in the past. Yet, neither the British, nor the U.S., have an honest interest in protecting the Kurds. The U.S. supported Iraq in the 80s when Iraq was attacking the Kurds, sometimes using biological and chemical weapons. Look at the British and U.S. positions with regards to other countries (Turkey, Syria, Iran) that discriminate and use repression against their "own" Kurds.

U.N. Security Council resolutions do not permit the "over-flight" bombing runs that the U.S. and Britain are carrying out. The Security Council is allowing itself to be used and abused.

International law is a red-herring. The U.S.'s Iraq policy is about our economic and military interests.

The 1991 "Operation Desert Storm" was wrong and immoral, killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, with U.N. "approval". The real killer in Iraq are the commercial and financial sanctions (that have contributed to well over 500,000 civilian deaths, according to the U.N. itself), not the post-war, on-going bombing runs that have killed thousands.

My decision to write the piece about the bombing runs – as opposed to the sanctions – was to focus attention on the grotesque nature of regularly putting U.S. and British bombing runs on the front page, justifying and almost glorifying them. The U.S.-British position is further undermining the very chance of having a just global order.

**"DARK AGES"**

Oh, the tricks our educators and history books play on us, saying the "dark ages" happened a long time ago.

Everyday, across the world, people are tortured by governments and jailers, by paramilitary and irregular forces, by husbands and boyfriends. From beatings, mutilation, forced starvation, burnings,

electrical shocks, drownings and rapes, to threats to oneself or one's family, to forcing one to watch or listen while another person – perhaps a family member or loved one – is tortured.

Everyday, across the planet great work is being done by citizen activists to expose and eradicate torture, to support the victims of torture who live amongst us, perhaps next door. Nearly half-a-million torture survivors live in the U.S. alone.

### IT IS THE ATTACK THAT COUNTS

Information swirls about "terrorists" in the ex-Yugoslavia. The terrorists are the Albanians. Wait! Last year, the Albanians were the "Freedom Fighters", allies against the Serbs.

Oh well! We must attack them as well, because ... . Attack often, but not too much, for fear of leaving nothing left to attack.

### "FREE" TRADE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS, QUEBEC CITY

In April 2001, the government of Canada hosted the "Free" Trade Summit of the Americas in Quebec City – with leaders from across the America ... except Cuba.

Rights Action organized one speaking tour from Washington to Quebec City, with Annie Bird (my co-director) and Gustavo Castro, a grassroots academic-activist from Chiapas, Mexico; and another speaking tour from Toronto to Quebec City, with Dan Fireside, myself and Bertha Caceres, a community leader and activist from Honduras.

On these speaking tours and in Quebec City, Bertha and Gustavo were talking about the ravages and environmental destruction caused by the so-called "free" trade development model.

### TEAR DOWN THE WALL

In defense of "free" trade, a 3-meter high wall is erected around Old Quebec, heavily armed police waiting. With the red carpet rolled out, the kings and queens of money and politics arrive by jet, helicopter or limo, isolated from and wary of the tens of thousands arriving in Quebec City on foot, in bus, car or hitchhiking.

In the tension of night protests, after the riot troops have forced us down the hill with volleys of tear gas canisters, we march back up the hill. From a nearby apartment, Pink Floyd's "The Wall" blasts into the smoke-filled night.

Bertha (from Honduras) and Gustavo (from Chiapas) have come a long way, not to be blasted by water cannons, gassed or shot at, and not to get inside the wall to score a business deal. They have come to talk of the costs of "free" trade to the majority of people – impoverished, often repressed – in Honduras and Chiapas.

### BAD CUBA

Canada has invited every Latin American country, except Cuba, to the "Free" Trade Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.

At the Summit, no leader, corporate tycoon or journalist admitted inside the walled-in compound will ask this question: How has Cuba eradicated poverty and provided a decent life for its people, while a majority of people in the "free trade" countries of the Americas still live in poverty and extreme poverty?

### "RADICAL" IN QUEBEC CITY

Dodging tear-gas canisters and protesting the FTAA ("Free Trade" Agreement of the Americas), there is nothing "free" about trade. The costs are (not) seen in the impoverished barrios and rural areas of the Americas; (not) seen in polluted rivers and destroyed forests.

**GRAFFITI:** *La radicalite est d'etre ensemble.* (Radical is to be together)



**(IR)RELEVANT AUTHORITY**

Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney writes in the *Globe and Mail* about the bonuses of a "free" trade world. Mulroney lives well – he is a rich man. "Free" trade has been good for him. I read what he wrote. I disagree. He has money and power, and so what?

There is much work to do with the victims of "free" trade and the repression used to keep it in place. Their self-serving justifications are irrelevant, even as their exploitation and repression are so harmful.

**GAS DAY #1 - APRIL 21**

Thousands of tear gas canisters are shot in the air; many directly at protesters from short range. Hundreds of rubber bullets are shot at protesters.

Forced down the hill of Old Quebec by tear gas, rubber bullets and baton-wielding police, we rest, drink water, fix our lemon laced bandanas over our mouths and noses, pick up our banners and head back up towards the "wall" the rich and powerful have built to restrict entry to their "free" trade parties. They won't let us in, but we will keep banging on their doors.

**AN ACCUMULATION OF TEARS**

After a volley of tear-gas and advancing gas-masked riot troops, dozens of people gag to breathe, washing stinging eyes. Some vomit. Some faint. Not fun; hard and necessary.

The necessity is in Gustavo and Bertha's eyes, as they give interviews – on the streets, to independent media sources (the corporate owned media journalists are inside "the wall") - about the historic and endemic impoverishment, discrimination and repression of people in Honduras and Chiapas, where multinational companies control the best lands and resources, where the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund tell the governments what to do, where the U.S. sells weapons and trains the armies to quell dissent.

**STREET SMARTS: DODGING TEAR-GAS ON BOULEVARD RENE LEVESQUE**

We spent the day on the Boulevard, advancing with our signs and anger; pushed back by water cannons, tear-gas and rubber bullets. Early in the day, we did not handle the tear-gas well, and got gassed out 3 times. By the afternoon, we were adept at watching the incoming tear-gas canisters, quickly running upwind when they landed. We became experts in the power of the water cannon trucks, knowing how close we could march to this one, remaining further back from that one.

Why did we study and learn these things? There is a need to reject impoverishment, discrimination and repression.

**PANTLESS PROTESTER**

With the crowd 5 meters from "the wall", the police open the water cannons full force. The crowd was pushed tumbling back. Into the force of the hose ran a man, butt naked, dancing and twisting, hopping and hooting, relieving tension and anger.

**THINGS YOU DON'T REDUCE AND ALLEVIATE**

Political leaders, "development" gurus and the media talk about how they are working hard to reduce and alleviate poverty ..., as if one should work to reduce or alleviate poverty. Rape, torture and impoverishment should be dealt with zero tolerance.

**GLOBALIZATION FROM ABOVE**

I read in a newspaper that actor Charlie Sheen bought all the seats in the outfield of a baseball stadium so that he might catch a home run ball. This is what rich people can do. This is what our mainstream culture glorifies.

**GLOBAL APARTHEID**

The National Post reports on the world's richest men: Sam Robson Walton (\$101 billion), Bill Gates (\$89 billion).

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**PERU**

In 2001, I traveled to Peru to investigate the situation of some 22,000 political prisoners in jails, some for life, some for 10-25 years, on wide range of charges related to "terrorism".

The military regime of Alberto Fujimori, that came into power in 1990 - supported by the U.S.A., Canada and international corporations - perfected the art of jailing anyone they suspected of supporting the armed rebel groups or protesting against the government, charging them with crimes related to terrorism.

Complicating the situation in Peru was the fact that one of the armed rebel groups - the Sendero Luminoso - used fear and terrorism, like the Fujimori regime, to intentionally target the civilian population. Unlike other political situations I have come to know about in Latin America, in Peru the civilian population really did become trapped between two brutal forces.

**VISITOR #106**

On the inside of my arm, the guards stamp #106, and frisk me up and down. In the Santa Monica de Chorillos women's jail, in Lima, Peru, I visit Lori Berenson and other political prisoners. Most women are here, in abusive conditions (beatings, lack of food, dirty cells, isolation, held without trial, no defense lawyers), on trumped up charges of "terrorism" against the Peruvian State.

This country was led by former dictator Alberto Fujimori - and sidekick Vladimir Montesinos - backed by the U.S., Canada and Japan, the World Bank and I.M.F.  
I hate the repetitive patterns ...

**A RISKY MEETING**

By the Cathedral (Lima, Peru), the woman and her daughter find me, the gringo. She is a mother of a "disappeared" child. Across the Americas, there are hundreds of thousands of such mothers.

In a café, we speak of their work trying to help their loved ones wasting in jails as political prisoners, of their efforts to locate the disappeared.

Soon, we move to a 2nd café, because two men came in - separately - and sat at the two closest tables ... listening in on our conversation.

**GLOBALIZATION: DEFINING NUMBERS**

Last week, a man returned from a personal, \$20,000,000 trip to space, talking of humanity and a sense of peace and purpose.

For \$20,000,000, Nautilus Underwater System will build you a "sleep-eleven" luxury submarine, for your weekend pleasure.

**OF THE RIGHTS OF DOLPHINS AND PEOPLE**

The *Toronto Star* reported on abusive treatment of dolphins in Mexico's La Paz Dolphin Center. Hundreds of Canadians voiced outrage and demanded action. Fair enough.

Most Canadians do not express outrage and demand action about the abusive and exploited conditions in which millions of Mexicans live and work ... sometimes benefiting Canadian consumers with the production of cheap products and cheap winter time tourist getaways.

**CATCHY BOOK TITLE ... NOT A BEST SELLER**

The Global Order: Billionaires and Billions Impoverished.

**SPORTS, POWER AND MONEY**

The Canadian government and Olympic bid committee offer African countries money if they vote for Toronto to get the 2008 summer Olympics.

The system: The Canadian government, companies, investors and consumers benefit from Africa's cheap resources and labor, and help keep Africa impoverished by imposing I.M.F. and World

Bank structural adjustment programs.

Canada then offers African nations "aid" if they help us get the Olympics that will bring hundreds of millions of investment to Toronto.

### 25,000,000 DEAD

That is how many Africans have died of AIDS. What if the headlines read: "25,000,000 white North Americans have died of AIDS"?

### PYGANGICOM - SUICIDE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Pygangicom is the name of a "First Nations" town in northern Ontario that has the highest suicide rates in the world. I don't know where it is. I don't know which language the people speak, nor which gods they worship.

But I know their injustice and suffering is an integral part of "Canadian" history that began when "second" and "third" nations invaded and ended up with the "first" nations killing themselves.

### GLOBALIZATION FROM ABOVE

*Elevate* - a new magazine - aims at girls 15-30, promoting breast enlargements and other cuttings and stitchings ...  
My dear daughter, watch out for globalisation vultures.

### WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman said he didn't want to go to Kenya because he was afraid of snakes and feared that natives would cook him alive in a pot and eat him. Toronto citizens have voted him into office many times. Small wonder 25,000,000 Africans have been killed by AIDS.

### NO "EGALITARIAN" IN CANADA

Canadian Prime Minister Chretien got in a tiff with Britain because they knighted a Canadian citizen, arguing this was against

Canada's laws and egalitarian nature. The press ate it up.

We're as egalitarian as the monarchy, as French and British imperialism taking land from the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, as *Forbes'* annual list of billionaires, as millionaire athletes, as people barely getting by on minimum wage, as Hollywood actors and rock stars, as many First Nations peoples living in harsh conditions on "reserves", as global mining barons...

### NO "CRISIS" IN GUATEMALA

News from Guatemala: The military is re-arming paramilitary squads; lynchings and impoverishment are widespread.

Just don't confuse this for a crisis - this is normal.

### THE FEVER IS WHERE THE HEART LIES

As the killings and poverties go endlessly on in Guatemala, Honduras, Chiapas ... I get mad at neighbors, family and friends in Toronto.

### CANADA'S "NATIVE PROBLEM"

The O.P.P. (Ontario Provincial Police) officers distribute, via the Internet, a photo of a dead native woman cut open during an autopsy. Caption: "Steak knives are good for more than steak." (*Toronto Star*, July 6, 2001)

### INCOMING EMAIL ... ASSASSINATIONS IN HONDURAS

My computer lights up. Incoming email. Double-click. I learn of the assassination of Carlos Roberto Flores due to his opposition to an internationally funded hydro-electric dam project in Olancho, Honduras. We have been working on this issue, supporting Carlos' community...

### "INTERNATIONAL AID" PROJECTS ... LIKE OPERACION CONDOR

An Argentinean court has charged former military leader Jorge



Videla with illicit association in *Operacion Condor*.

A favorite of the U.S. and the west during the "cold war", Videla is already under charges for: kidnapping babies from illegally captured women; torturing and killing the mothers after they gave birth in captivity; tossing their drugged bodies out the doors of airplanes doors flying over the sea to sharks waiting below; and selling the "orphaned" babies into adoption.

*Operacion Condor* was a five-country network (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay) dedicated to disappearing, torturing and assassinating "leftists". News articles do not mention that the U.S. financed, participated in and helped design *Operacion Condor*.

### PEOPLE OF RAIN

*Todo depende de la lluvia*, Santos Elena Gomez, from the community of San Lorenzo, Honduras, told me. Everything depends on the rain.

This phrase is utterly true, beyond many people's comprehension across the divides of poverty and wealth inside and between countries.

Across Honduras, people die of thirst and hunger. The earth dries, corn wilts, cows emaciate and mothers can't breast-feed, even as there is plenty of water for tourism, golf courses and for-export plantations.

### GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW, SLOWLY

The campesino meeting for 8am begins at 10am, and by then some have come and others have gone, because it is a hard walk from the remote pueblo and tortillas had to be prepared from 4am on and left for the family.

And then the one-ride-a-day, beat-up pick-up truck does not come down the torturous dirt road, so you can't make the meeting and have to hike home again – hungry and meeting-less.

Then, the 10am meeting in the next town goes to 12noon, and some have come and some have gone, as you have to get back

to the fields, and there are mouths to feed, unless the drought has arrived and then the meetings will be even harder.

The revolution is slow, always, because poverty – let alone racism, beatings and bullets – is relentlessly oppressive.

Yet the revolution still is, even when the powerful send their mercenaries and exploitation to every parched corn field to root out the revolutionary campesinos who are going to do their meetings anyways ... to fight for equality and fairness.

After all, they are moms and dads who love their children, families and friends.

### PERFECT REPRESSION

Impoverishment, the very cause of revolution, is the greatest repression against revolution because the poor – moms and dads, the elderly, girls and boys, babies – are dying and surviving of hunger.

### UN-HUMANITARIAN DISASTER, ALL THE TIME

(Unpublished Letter to Editor of the *Toronto Star*, November 5, 2001)

The article "Act Now to Prevent Disaster" addresses the desperate situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Former Canadian foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy argues: "There will be a huge political impact..." Too late! The deaths and damage are happening.

We have two choices: Stop the bombing and death and destruction right now, and assess and begin to remedy the widespread suffering we have already caused, or continue the bombing and attacks – in the name of all things good – and hold more conferences about humanitarian disasters and aid packages.

### "WE DON'T KNOW IT WHEN WE SEE IT – OR DO IT"

(Unpublished Letter to editor of the *Globe and Mail*)

In response to Marcus Gee's piece ("I know you are, but what am I", November 24, 2001) concerning the difficulty of defining

terrorism, it is clear that we cannot judge terrorism the way U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart judged pornography ("I know it when I see it") ...

... because we don't know terrorism when we see it or do it.

U.S.-trained, armed and financed military regimes used terrorism as state policy throughout Latin America in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and into the 1990s, targeting and terrorizing civilians. In Guatemala alone, more than 250,000 people – mostly poor Mayan campesinos – were massacred. Killing and terrorizing innocent civilians were the goals.

The sooner our leaders and media stop presenting the "war on terrorism" as an issue of "we the good" versus "they the evil", the sooner the global community will start the difficult work of creating global political and legal institutions that can deal with and resolve national and global problems peacefully.

### A CHRISTMAS TRIP

In 2001, I spent Christmas in Guatemala, with survivors of the massacres in the rural Mayan-Achi village of Rio Negro. These two days were no different than any other days in their lives of subsistence living.

### KAJ'YUP

Genocide survivor Jesus said: "Climb up there; it is a beautiful and peaceful place. You hear only the airs (*los aires*)."

Kajyup is an ancient community of the Maya-Achi people from where – over 500 years ago – Carlos and Jesus' ancestors may have come. In the airs above Rabinal, I sit by a stone hut where ceremonies are still held by Achi people.

Gazing across the Rabinal valley, I know the roots of Guatemala's repression and discrimination go back 40 years, 100 years, over 500 years. I am a beneficiary of a conquering and imperialist past and live better than the conquered and imperialized peoples of the planet. The Mayan people survive, resist and go forward, never forgetting the past.

It is the conquerors and imperializers who try to forget the past.

### FRIENDS ... DUE TO THE GENOCIDE

At 7am, a pickup truck with 13 people from Pacux – family members of the victims of the Rio Negro massacres – arrived, and we depart for the *Finca* (farm) Sahomax, six hours away. It is a glorious morning; we wind up and down steep mountain sides through San Miguel Chicaj, on to Salama, and north to Coban.

Carlos Chen tells of their community development and human rights projects. On March 13, 1982, Carlos' first wife – pregnant at the time – and two infant children were killed in one of the four Rio Negro massacres. Since 1992, he has worked tirelessly for the well-being of the survivors, and his 2 new children. Our paths crossed for the first time in 1994 – friends because of genocide and a sense of equality and justice.

### WITH "AWARDS" LIKE THIS

For close to 20 years, the Rio Negro massacre survivors have been hungry and poor in the community of Pacux, amidst arid land they were "awarded" by the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank as "compensation" for being forcibly evicted from their lands to make way for the Chixoy Dam.

### THE PROMISED LAND DOES NOT GET EASIER

We arrive at the Sahomax farm – a promised land for massacre survivors of Rio Negro. Rich land, stretching high up mountain sides. My companions don't cry from happiness; too tired; cried too many times. Besides, they know just how hard life is here in the promised land.

Disrepair and decay cover the house and machinery of this abandoned cardamom farm that the Rio Negro survivors were "granted" by the Guatemalan government, under guilty pressure from the Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank that funded the deadly and ill-fated Chixoy hydro-electric "development" project, 1975-1985. Because the Rio Negro community opposed being illegally and forcibly evicted from their lands in 1982, over 440 community members were massacred by



the Guatemalan Army.

## WATER

Off the dirt road, we hike 20 minutes through semi-tropical jungle to the neighboring impoverished community of Rio Mujarras, a Mayan-Kekchi community where few speak Spanish. The Rio Negro survivors have come to talk with community leaders about permission to draw water from the Mujarras river.

We stand away from a little hut. Victor comes out barefoot, in underwear and a t-shirt, and we squat under the trees; his wife watching timidly from the doorway. The men talk. With a stick, Cristobal draws a map in the dirt of the river and the two communities and a line where the Rio Negro survivors would like to have access to the river. Victor says there will be no problem. It is agreed.

Nodding good-bye, we walk along a dirt path by huts of wood and tin. At a hut, we buy warm soda pop. The Kekchi woman who lives there knows no Spanish or Achi, so it takes us a few tries to figure out how much money we owe her. We cut bananas from a tree and walk a network of paths back to the house where the Rio Negro survivors are camped – mission accomplished.

## EARTH, WATER AND HARVESTS

Community members take me hiking to the high point of their land. They talk of the challenge of getting two cardamom, corn and bean harvests per year. Easier said than done. The Sahomax farm has been abandoned for over 5 years. With machetes, the men have been felling small trees, bushes and thick undergrowth, up and down the steep slopes, for almost 3 years. Progress is slow, and they earn no money doing this. They have no money. Regularly, they migrate to the south coast of Guatemala to earn \$2/day on the for-export plantations of the elites.

## A GRINGO BUMP ON A LOG

At 5:30, dusk sets in this humid green valley. Thick is the cacophony of birds, bugs, distant dogs and howler monkeys.

On a stump, I sit in a field planted with corn, the food of survival for over 500 years. I have known before and remember again how hard every day of life is for the people from Rio Negro, indigenous survivors of histories of repression, impoverishment and discrimination. The people who don't appear in history books, that "experts" and great "explorers" know little about.

## SURVIVAL IS "SUCCESS"

Like survivors of repression and impoverishment across the globe, the people of Rio Negro start a new life on the Sahomax farm with little. Because they have lived their entire lives with little, they need little to survive ... and often don't get that, and of course on they go. Their not-so-mere survival is proof of success in life.

## SO MUCH NOTHING

They have so much of nothing, it is hard to describe. They don't have almost nothing today. They have almost nothing almost all the time.

## 'LIKE A CAMPFIRE'

In the evening, we gather by the "kitchen" - a fire under a tin roof lean-to where the women have been cooking tortillas and beans. It is almost like a campfire scene.

No! As soon as the words are written, I realize they are wrong. 'Campfire' conjures many things, all of which have nothing to do with subsistence and survival.

Looking into the fire, boiling the water to cook the corn to survive, I remember a book, *A Dream like Mine*. I'm tired of remembering, tired of anger, tired of injustices that give way to anger and tiredness; injustices that will not soon end.

## EASY LAUGHS

It is 7 or 8pm, and a great quiet has come to this valley. Clara sits by the fire where she has been much of the day. Her 3 young boys eat chocolate cookies I have brought. Clara has a happy

smile. She lost her only daughter at childbirth. She and the boys laugh easily at bad jokes and funny faces. Clara likes it better here than Pacux "because there is lots of firewood nearby and the chickens don't die here as much as in Pacux".

Now, Christmas day is done. Another day of work, survival, and a few idle moments of soft talk and laughter, around the fire. All lie on the floor, the women and children indoors, the men and boys on the porch. No mattresses, few blankets.

### GREY AND GREEN

The rains came torrentially this Christmas night. In the dark, we scurry around the porch to get away from the blowing rain. I slept intermittently, waking to the water pounding on tin roof, feeling to see if we were dry. The morning of the 26th is thick grey, dripping over the deep green of the jungle.

### SMALL THINGS

It has been a rich Christmas time for me. I am not of these people. They have been forced to live too many generations with too little; I have lived many generations with much. I will work with them, tell these stories, and raise funds for their projects so they can build a better future, connected to and never forgetting their past.



## 2002: As It Should (Not) Be

### HAPPY NEW YEAR - January 1

Warm and relaxed, I sit in a log cabin in Canada, after a run in the snow and forests. Upstairs, people snore peacefully, secure from the death and destruction of war pending in Iraq. Happy New Year. Dear people of Iraq, beware!

### "DAZZLING SKILL"

"Thumbs up", writes Marcus Gee (*Globe and Mail*), about the military attack, "with dazzling skill", of the U.S. in Afghanistan.

### WHAT "KIND OF ORDER", FOR WHOM?

"Say what you will about the Cold War, at least it imposed a kind of order upon the world. At least you knew who your enemies were – and who were your friends. The Cold War created conflict, to put it mildly, but it also served to stifle a battle or two." (Oakland Ross, *Toronto Star*, January 6, 2002)

Assuredly, the journalist wrote this from the comfort of a secure home in Canada, where family and friends live safe lives; no hunger, starvation, or death by war or repression for them ... as in Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Chile, Argentina, Peru, El Salvador, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Guatemala where millions were killed during the Cold War, in the name of imposing a kind of order.



**A DOG'S LIFE**

"Take any old home in the U.S.A. There, the dogs live better than the people of the Ixil triangle. The dogs eat better; have better homes and health than the Ixil people."

(Guatemalan Bishop Juan Gerardi, assassinated in April 1998 for his human rights work. *Prensa Libre*, January 29, 2002)

**A "RECYCLING" PROGRAM**

Silvia Ajin Tocay works in the Zone 3 dump of Guatemala City, sorting through the garbage every day, looking for "recyclables." Her home, a hut, is in the dump. "If we are lucky, we can earn \$4 in one day," says Ajin. "I have done this since I was a little girl, because no one taught me anything else."

**A NORMAL LIFE ALONG A HIGHWAY**

Along the south coast highway to Champerico, Guatemala, around kilometer 206, over 2000 poor people – infants to great grand-parents – live under plastic sheets stretched over wooden frames. They have no where else on earth to live. They are surrounded by vast tracks of the richest lands in Guatemala, protected by men with guns, used to produce coffee, meat, sugar and cotton for export to North America.

**GLOBALIZATION FROM ABOVE: THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM**

The Lehman Brothers pay Elton John \$1,000,000 to sing a song for 200 special guests during the New York City meeting of the World Economic Forum, where government leaders, business men, investors, Bill Gates and Bono gather to agree on how to keep this global order in place, the very global order that allows them to live in such extraordinary wealth and luxury. A Lehman Brothers official explained that it was worth paying Elton \$1 million because the deal will be struck over dinner and drink: "We will recover our \$1M investment in one minute."

**"GARBAGE IMMIGRANTS"**

Joe Li, of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, wants

Ontario to have its own immigration policy, one not determined by Ottawa: "It looks like we just get the garbage immigrants."

Who are these garbage immigrants? What are their names? What are their aspirations? Where are they from? Who and what did they leave behind in their home countries?

Where is Joe Li from? Where are we all from and what do we all want in life?

**GLOBALIZATION FROM ABOVE – WAR-MONGERING IN CANADA**

Historian Jack Granastein said to the CBC's Shelagh Rogers: "The UN did not find weapons [in Iraq] not because they are not there, but because Iraq hid them so well."

I wait for Shelagh, a journalist, to ask him an obvious question: "How do you know this, Jack?"

She does not. And she did not ask him another obvious question: "Which country has the most WMD (weapons of mass destruction) on the planet, Jack?"

Neither does she ask him about Canada's multi-billion dollar military industry and whether Canadian companies might be making components of WMD?

It was a polite and friendly conversation, contributing to widespread ignorance amongst listeners, and to more death in Iraq.

\*\*\*

"Propaganda is as powerful as heroin;  
it surreptitiously dissolves all capacity to think."  
(*A Sunday at the Pool in Kingall*, by Gil Courtemanche)

\*\*\*

**GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW – A CONVERSATION IN CHIAPAS**

In front of a church in San Cristobal de las Casas (Chiapas), I buy Zapatistas dolls from two girls.

"Who are these?"  
"Zapatista leaders."

"What are their names?"

"Marcos and Ramona,

"Who are Zapatistas?"

"Us,

"Who are you?"

"Indigenous people,

"What language do you speak?"

"Tzotzil."

"What do Zapatistas do?"

"Fight for us."

#### MYTHOLOGY ABOUT POVERTY

Bonnie Brown, of the Canadian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health, explains: "We [Canadians] try to do things so that poor people are not prevented from doing things that all people can do." (CBC Radio, March 7, 2002)

Memo to Bonnie Brown: Being poor means that you can't do most things that people with enough money can do!

#### A NEED TO WAR

Emerging from a meeting with U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney, British Prime Minister Tony Blair assures: "There is a threat from Saddam Hussein and the weapons of mass destruction he has acquired. It is not in doubt at all."

#### THE POVERTY OF OUR HEADLINES

"[Prime Minister] Chretien takes lead on African poverty", a *Toronto Star* front-page headline claims, which is not true, unless the *Toronto Star* means the Canadian government is taking the lead on promoting Canadian business interests in Africa which sometimes contribute to and benefit from exploitation and poverty.

#### ARCHBISHOP ROMERO – ALIVE AND DEAD TODAY

On March 22, 1980, a U.S.-armed and trained death squad assassinated Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador because Romero, in his sermons and radio programs, decried

the impoverishment of the Salvadoran people, the repression the oligarchy used to keep the people poor, the U.S. support for the oligarchy and military that used repression to keep the people poor.

22 years later, to the day of assassination, President George Bush will visit El Salvador to push forward a "free" trade agenda that favors the Salvadoran oligarchy and North American companies and investors who will need to use repression to keep the people poor.

#### REDUNDANCIES ... IN GUATEMALA

In the mountains of Rabinal, Jesus Tecu Osorio received another death threat.

Jesus' family and community of Rio Negro were massacred by the military regimes of the 1980s; many family and community members have been killed since that time – of poverty and repression.

To threaten Jesus with death is stating the obvious.

#### DIEGO OLIVARES STILL SEARCHING FOR FAMILY

(This email was sent into the internet world by an Argentinean man looking for his brother, who was given into forced adoption after their parents were "disappeared" by the U.S. and western-backed generals of the 1970s and 80s).

Sent: Monday, March 25, 2002, 4:19 PM

Subject: Búsqueda

*Disculpen la molestia. Mi nombre es Diego Olivares, tengo 23 años y soy de nacionalidad argentina. Soy hijo de padres desaparecidos durante la dictadura militar argentina, fines de 1979 y principios de 1980. Ellos eran Juan Olivares (25 años en el día de su desaparición) y Julieta Alzugaray (23 años).*



La razón de este email es encontrar a mi hermano dado en adopción después de la desaparición de mis padres. He intentado encontrarlo a través de varios caminos sin llegar a obtener resultados ciertos. Un amigo me comento acerca de estas cadenas de mail y me decidí; a realizarla con la esperanza de que mi hermano al leerla (o alguna persona cercana a él) se comunique conmigo para realizar el esperado reencuentro.

Para ello necesito de su ayuda. He consultado en varios organismos gubernamentales y de derechos humanos, así como H.I.J.O.S. y MADRES DE PLAZA DE MAYO, sin llegar a obtener información certera. Los únicos datos que me han dado es que existen sospechas de que mi hermano podría haber sido dado en adopción, con el nombre de ALEXIS FRENETTE, a una pareja de franceses; o bien podría estar en el país con cualquier otro nombre.

Por favor envíen este mail a cuanta persona conozcan con la esperanza de poder reencontrarme con mi hermano y llegar a tan ansiado día. Si tienen alguna información, escríbanme a mi dirección de e-mail: [diegoolivares@hotmail.com](mailto:diegoolivares@hotmail.com), ya que esa es la única forma de contactarme, por lo que no poseo aposento propio y estoy en continuo movimiento. Muchas gracias, Diego Olivares.

PD: copien este email y péguenlo en otro nuevo así no se acumulan piquitos al principio del renglon. Gracias.

#### VISITOR "96/ P.1"

From Lima, Peru, we bus north to Ica, along a desolation road by the Pacific Ocean. Mountains, sand and hard-scrabble living. At the end of a winding dirt road, Rene and I enter the high-security jail with bags of vegetables and fruit to meet with 10 people jailed on accusations of "terrorism". Visitor #96 to pavilion #1. Here, we find them – political prisoners. There! I have written the words "political prisoners" (not "terrorists") – words whose use could get a Peruvian jailed for terrorism!

#### A MOTHER'S PAIN

In the middle of a desert, far from any town, there is a jail. We meet with Gladys Espinoza, Dominga Mamami Quispe and Lucerno Cuampo Miranda.

There! I have publicly written their names. Political prisoners, jailed for 10 years on charges of "terrorism", and they had been fighting against an unjust, racist, corrupt and violent regime ... U.S. and western backed.

Lucerno has her 5-month-old baby Ernesto with her, who will be taken from her when he is 1-year-old. The mom will remain in jail and her baby boy will be taken from her.

Rene and I spent the day with the women and Ernesto. We laughed, and played with Ernesto, and took photos, and counted the minutes, and squeezed in the last minutes, and hugged good-byes and waved as the three isolated women cried and cried, saying "Please come back again".

What isolation, so brutal and successful.

#### SCREAMS FROM A SCRAP OF PAPER – 19 YEARS LATER

"Mamacita, estoy en el interior del cuartel. Busca un abogado. Busca dinero y por favor sacame. Estoy desesperado."

"Mom, I am in the military base. Get a lawyer. Look for some money and please get me out. I am desperate."

This note was written by Arquimedes Ascarza Mendoza on a scrap of paper. Her son never got out of the military base, but the note did, and his mother kept it. Today, 19 years later, his "Mamacita" – Angelica Mendoza de Ascarza – presents the note to the "Truth Commission" that is investigating the killings and disappearances in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s.

#### RAVINES OF DEATH

Into the ravines (*quebradas*) of Puraquí, Infiernillo and Santa Barbara, Peruvian soldiers dumped the assassinated and often tortured bodies of the young and old, women and men, and then kept people (distracted family members looking for disappeared loved ones) away until scavenger birds, dogs and wild pigs did what they do, further disappearing the already disappeared.

**DILEMMA IN THE "WAR ON TERRORISM"**

President George Bush: "America has a message for the nations of the world. If you harbor terrorists, you are a terrorist. If you train and arm a terrorist, you are a terrorist. If you feed or fund a terrorist, you're a terrorist, and you will be held accountable by the U.S. and our allies."

The U.S. and its allies have harbored terrorists, trained and armed terrorists, fed and funded terrorists. (Have you heard of the School of the Americas?)

Will the U.S. arrest, torture and bomb itself?

**LET THEM EAT MONEY**

U.S. C-130 aircraft fly high over bombed hills and villages in Afghanistan dropping bundles of 10,000 Afghani currency (40,000 Afghani = US\$1) in envelopes adorned with the image of President George Bush.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR: MORE WARTO COME, ON YOUR FAVOURITE NIGHTLY NEWS**

The *New York Times* (April 28, 2002) reports, page one: "U.S. Blueprint to Topple Hussein Weighs a Big Invasion Next Year."

There it is. The corporate media is not questioning the rationale to war, but helping prepare us to sit back and watch next year's illegal invasion on TV, and cheer, shake our heads in agreement or disagreement, or change the channel. There will be lots of suffering and death, far from here, and there will lots of movies and sports to watch on TV.

**CANADIAN DREAM**

In Kaminski's, near Calgary, the unjustly rich nations of the planet gather behind barbed wire and armed guards at the G8 meeting. Canadian Prime Minister Chretien repeats another story fundamental to the myth of Canada: "As we were a colony, we can negotiate a better partnership between the G8 and Africa." French and English Canadians are the children of European

colonizers who invaded the Americas, took over lands, oppressed and committed ethnocide against the indigenous peoples; some brought African slaves to work for their benefit. French and English Canadians were the colonizers; the indigenous peoples of the Americas were the colonized.

**THINGS THE RICH AND POWERFUL ARE FORCED TO DO**

As the unjustly rich and powerful nations meet at the G8 meeting in Kaminski's, discussing peace, equality, democracy, etcetera, the U.S. and Britain carry out 32 bombing runs over Iraq - that very same day.

**"CANADIAN SNOWBIRDS" - VICTIMS OF THE "WAR ON TERRORISM"**

The CBC and *Globe and Mail* report (May 17, 2002) how "Canadian snowbirds" might not be able to travel so freely to Florida during the cold months, as the U.S. imposes new travel restrictions, looking for "terrorists".

**FILL IN THE SPACES**

I learn from our office in Guatemala that two more *campesinos* have been killed. I don't have their names but I know their stories:

They were poor and Mayan.

They come from families of moms and dads, brothers and sisters who will miss them very much and who will also be afraid for their own lives now.

Probably they had wives and children who will miss them badly, and whose poverty will increase and who will also now be afraid for their own lives.

Soon we will fill in the details: names, date of birth, place of living, but they are already in the place of the dead, missed so much.

**THE FEVER**

In a grand home, on a tree-lined street, in a wealthy part of a wealthy city like Toronto, I am at a party with food, drinks and laughter - the kids play and play. The kids here do not know they



live in the top 1% of the planet's population in terms of wealth, privilege and play time.

At the height of the party, the talk – with palpable anger - turns to striking workers in Toronto, and "What do they want, anyway?" "The fever" sets in. My head swarms with images of Guatemala, Honduras, Chiapas, Peru ... listening to wealthy people complain, indignantly, of how striking workers are complicating their lives.

### SUBSIDING FEVER

I ran across a country lane, with a dog named Ruby, and bound into the forest. The trail is overgrown, and I skip through, ducking ... and still the fever burned. I crossed a second dirt road, into another forest, and dipped and looped along a trail, still burning. I came across a mountain bike trail, and ran as it curved and dipped and bumbled over logs.

The fever was subsiding as I pounded along Mother Earth, breathing hard. I felt like a deer, and if you were watching, I am sure you would see a plodding bear, but either way, I was at one with the earth, and the fever of injustice and inequality was subsiding.

### HERE A SUMMIT, THERE A SUMMIT, EVERYWHERE A SUMMIT SUMMIT

...

The U.N. held another summit on global impoverishment and the attendees ate well, shaking their heads gravely saying that we all must work harder to end poverty.

Pass the soufflé, and please, do not ask whether the distribution of wealth and poverty are linked!

### AIDS AND THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

On CBC Radio (June 20, 2002), Shelagh Rogers interviews Steven Lewis about how Africa is being torn asunder by AIDS, how this is tragic, how millions are dying, how the children are living in

poverty without parents, and ... neither Steven nor Shelagh go on to say that Africa has been torn asunder by:

- the legacy of European colonialism,
- the legacy of the Slave Trade (including the killing of millions of Africans, the enslavement of millions, and the benefiting from the exploitation of their lives and labor),
- the legacy of Western support, during the so-called Cold War, for oligarchic tyrants,
- the legacy of past, present and future resource exploitation by global companies and investors, by IMF-imposed structural adjustment programs,
- the legacy of dysfunctional, unjust governments.

### THE REUNITING OF SARA MENDEZ AND SIMON RIGNETO

On July 13, 1976, in Argentina, Sara Mendez and her 20-day baby (Simon Rigneto) were illegally jailed and "disappeared" by the U.S. and western-backed regime. Her infant son was stolen from her, ripping her heart out.

Argentina was also fighting the war on communism, so kidnapping, disappearing, torturing, raping and killing were not terrorism, but ... um ... necessary and widespread.

Sara Mendez was tortured, raped and jailed in Uruguay, as part of Operacion Condor which few people in North America have heard of because it was a U.S. designed and supported plan of repression to root out "communists" in 6 countries (Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia).

And Sara never saw her son, who was "adopted" by a family that paid for him, money paid to the military who raped her and sold him.

Eventually, 'luckily', Sara got out of jail ... and looked and looked and looked ... until March 12, 2002, when they were reunited. How this reunion came about is a very long, complicated, courageous story.

That's all. That's everything, for her. No justice will be done. For Sara Mendez, I am happy beyond happy. Can you imagine?

**ALL-STAR TEAM**

(Email from Scott Murray)

One thing these globalization dudes have going for them is a well-oiled publicity machine ... so fight hype with hype. Let's have a yearly Rights Action "All-Star" Team:

**Starting Centre:** the Phnom Penh Phenom Aki Ra. Aki, in his short time on planet earth, has been conscripted into four different armies, been forced to eat feces, been tortured by various sadistic jailers, and has helped clear over 57,000 landmines.

**Starting Right Wing:** Carlos "the Survivor" Chen. Carlos' whole family was massacred by the U.S.-backed Guatemalan regime, because his Mayan community of Rio Negro opposed a World Bank funded hydro-electric project, but sturdy and steady Carlos continues to fight the fight, helping people who have suffered similar violations and atrocities to struggle on.

**Starting Left Wing:** Lori "The Hurricane" Berenson. She sits like Buddha in a ten-foot-cell in Peru, falsely accused, imprisoned and sentenced in a land where human rights violations are the norm, not the aberration.

**Starting Right Defense:** Caleli. No, not a World Class street clown, who made thousands of kids laugh, but someone whose life was taken from him 18 years ago in Guatemala, even though he officially lived to 2001. He survived the Guatemalan repression – receiving commendable recognition for how he dealt with being tortured – and suffered deprivations that most of us can't even begin to imagine.

**Starting Left Defense:** Chico Mendes, because he knew he was going to be killed struggling for the rights of his fellow *campesinos* in the Amazon.

**Starting Goaltender:** the Argentinean Mothers of the Disappeared, because of their unflagging tenacity to find their loved ones.

**Starting Manager:** Archbishop Oscar Romero, assassinated in El Salvador because he told the U.S. government to stop training, arming and funding the Salvadoran military and death squads who were massacring the Salvadoran poor.

**"WMD" – WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION / WORDS OF MASS DECEPTION**

John Hendren writes, in a "Special to the *Toronto Star*" (July 8, 2002), that "Pentagon officials, crafting a plan for potential invasion of Iraq, are contending with a problem they did not face during the 1991 Persian Gulf War: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has little to lose this time by unleashing weapons of mass destruction (WMD)."

By publishing these words of mass deception (WMD), the *Toronto Star* is doing its part preparing the public to be horrified by the WMD that will be unleashed.

Later, there will be no apologies from the *Toronto Star* for its WMD when it is "discovered" that Iraq has no WMD.

The *Toronto Star* does not report that the U.S., Britain, Russia and France have the most WMD on the planet, that it is these and other western nations that most have used WMD and WMD across the planet for, say, 500 years.

There will be no apology from the *Toronto Star*, or anyone, to the girls and boys, moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas who had to be destroyed by our WMD so as to ensure that Iraq does not use its WMD, which it doesn't have.

**"MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS"**

The *Globe and Mail* (July 14, 2002) reports that Canadian billionaire David Thompson paid US\$76.7 million for the Peter Paul Rubins painting "Massacre of the Innocents".

Speaking of massacring the innocents, it would save lives were the *Globe and Mail* to report honestly on the massive killing of innocents that the countries of the west are contributing to in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guatemala, Haiti ...

**CANADA'S COMFORTABLE CASUAL COMPLICITY**

President Bush "can always try to oust Iraq's Saddam Hussein to stop the slide in his public approval ratings," writes William Walker, Washington correspondent for the *Toronto Star* (July 7, 2002).



There it is. "News" from an "investigative" reporter. No hard questions for the President; no shock or outrage from the Canadian corporate media, let alone our politicians.

And what of the Iraqi women, men, boys and girls (people like reporter William Walker's loved ones, friends and family) who will be killed and maimed for approval ratings?

#### **WE ARE THE I.M.F.**

Robert Rubin, former U.S. Treasury Secretary, now chairman of Citigroup's executive committee, was asked if the U.S. would seek economic help from the International Monetary Fund? "If I was at Treasury, I could go to the I.M.F. and say we need a program... And what's fortunate is that we can influence the I.M.F., so I could negotiate with myself." (*50 Years Is Enough*)

#### **THE TRUTH IS ... THE OIL IS OURS**

"As a part of our plan for Iraq, in addition to identifying the political leadership and building democracy, we're going to run the oil business. We're going to run it well. We're going to make money. And it's going to help pay for the rehabilitation of Iraq, because there is money there.

"Now, furthermore, if you want to be involved in that business, whether you're Russians or French or whoever, you must be with us in the beginning of this business. We're going to set up the business together. We're going in together. Because once we get there, we're going to control the oil business."

(Senator Richard Lugar, Republican from Indiana, Chairperson of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senate hearings, July 31 and August 1, 2002)

#### **SHAMATTAWA - "SUICIDE CAPITAL"**

Most Canadians have not heard of Shamattawa, "suicide capital of Canada"; maybe of the world. Perhaps the Guinness Book of Records will write this up. Born and raised in a history of colonial racism, dispossession, poverty and despair, life in Shamattawa (and many First Nations "reserves") is harsh for the heartiest of souls,

let alone a First Nations "Canadian" kid born to die of imposed and reinforced self-hatred.

#### **CAN YOU DIG IT**

In Rabinal, Guatemala, genocide was committed against the Mayan-Achi population in the 1970s and 80s. Twenty years later, I watch as forensic anthropologists dig up a mass grave in a local school, of all places, where some of the hundreds of thousands of murdered people were dumped.

The first exhumations in Guatemala took place in 1992. Like hundreds of digs since, and hundreds to come, traumatized family and community members gather for days and weeks around the slowly opening pit in the ground, awaiting reconnection with their murdered loved ones, seeking closure on something as big as a genocide done in the name of fighting communism.

#### **THE EYES OF MY DAUGHTER**

A little Mayan girl, arm out stretched, trying to sell lemons on the side of a road in a place called Chiapas.

#### **THE BACK OF MY GRANDMOTHER**

Bent forward, carrying a too big load on a too tired body, not looking up, as we drive by on a road in a place called Chiapas.

#### **SLAVE REVOLT IN THE 15 DE MAYO COMMUNITY**

As far as the eye can see, in all directions, the Suazo family owns the land and rivers, and the lives and sweat of thousands of Honduran *campesinos* who live and work here as virtual slaves. Slave Revolt: I sit on a log, in a dirt-floor hut in a community where the *campesinos* have taken back the land, on May 15. Their grand-parents and parents grew up here, and worked the land, for nothing.

It is time for something.

Gathered on logs in the centre of the community, we talk of all

they don't have and all that Suazo family has. We talk of the police and hired thugs that Suazo has sent to beat them, burn their huts and put them in jail.

A little girl runs around our meeting. After a while she sits on her mother's lap, looking glum. Then she vomits on the dirt floor, until there is nothing left to vomit. She shakes in her mother's arms – who holds her tenderly.

The meeting goes on and on, talking of Suazo's killers-for-hire, the lack of water, health services and work, and of how they must stay together, united, to endure all that Suazo throws at them, so that one day they can get title to the land, and then build their own community.

As we finish our meeting, a plate of corn is passed around ... gratitude for our visit. A baby boy walks by, naked, belly extended with an army of parasites.

#### WHO IS ISABEL MANUELES

Hiking into the community of Coyolar de las Delicias, I met Isabel carrying a 100-pound sack of corn (worth \$10) on his back, to the home an elderly villager. Isabel earned \$1.50 for this all day job. It is a steep hike in and out of Coyolar de las Delicias – 3 hours each way. With each \$1.50 earned, Isabel is saving to buy a sack of corn, so that his wife and four kids can survive until he has saved up another \$10 so he can buy another sack of corn.

#### STRENGTH AND COURAGE

What strength the campesinos of Central America have, just to get up everyday, to work and gather enough food, to make it through to the next day.

What courage Central American revolutionaries had, taking up weapons to fight the U.S. army and local regimes, despite such enormous differences in power, ethics and brutality.

#### THE DEAD WANDER AIMLESSLY

A massacre survivor in Rabinal, Guatemala, explained why they

had to dig up mass graves, 20 years later, to give their loved ones proper burials:

"We never were able to bury our dead. The dead wander aimlessly, interfering with our lives".

*"No pudimos enterrar a nuestros muertos, andan vagando, interfiriendo en nuestras vidas."*

Before initiating an exhumation, Mayan people ask forgiveness of the earth, for the blows they are going to give the earth with pick-axes and shovels.

#### ONE BOTTLE OF JUSTICE

In San Bartolome, Jocotenango, Guatemala, 15 years after the massacres of campesinos that he himself had ordered (including rapes and brutal violence), Don Juan went to the cemetery where the remains of the massacred ones now lay reburied (after their exhumation).

When he saw the names of the lives and families he helped destroy, he drank booze for 15 days straight and then he died. Surviving family members of the massacred ones say justice was done.

#### ANCESTRAL STRENGTH

In the Mayan-Kekchi language, "ancestors" means "our roots, our trunks".

When Jesus Tecu Osorio turns on his computer, a photo image of his mother appears. She was murdered, along with 440 other Rio Negro villagers, all victims to the Chixoy hydro-electric dam massacres – a "development" project of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank.

#### READING THE CLASSICS

Reading no Yeats and Keating, but urgent actions telling of yesterday's disappearance and assassination;

No T.S. Elliot, but testimonies of massacre survivors gathered around a mass grave;



No Shakespeare, but the play put on by the children of Santa Maria Tzeja, about the massacre of their parents and community;  
 No religious scripture, but the Lenca-Compostura ceremony in the drought-ridden community of Coyolar de las Delicias, Honduras, asking for rain, giving thanks for life.  
 Every day, classic stories of humanity.

### IMPORTANT THINGS

Like dropping off and picking up your children from school;  
 like potable water for everyone, everyday;  
 like justice for massacres and colonialism;  
 like balls to play with.

### THE CASUALNESS OF WEALTH AND POVERTY

Friendly and casual. Andy Berry (CBC-Toronto radio program) chats of how a person can now pay \$20,000,000 and travel into space. Ho-hum and thanks for being on our show. Ours is a culture so steeped in vast inequality and injustice, we do not see it, hear it or understand it.

### THINGS THAT SHOULDN'T BE WRITTEN ABOUT

In *Memoria de las Masacres de Rio Negro* (Memory of the Massacres of Rio Negro), the author, Jesus Tecu Osorio, writes of things that shouldn't be written of:  
 children beaten to death with branches;  
 tying ropes around babies' necks and smashing them against boulders;  
 raping women and girls, and then beating them to death with branches and rocks;  
 shooting them;  
 tossing them half-dead into a pit of bodies;  
 and on and on.

If a North American student wrote something like this for a high school paper, they would be sent to the principal's office, their parents and social workers called in, and a discussion would ensue about the troubled thoughts of the problem child.

### KILLING FORESTS AND IRAQIS

Forests are being clear-cut and newspapers filled with "debate" about bombing and shooting in Iraq. When the U.S. and supporters begin our next killing spree in Iraq, and when thousands more Iraqis are killed, then more forests will be clear-cut and newspapers filled with some of the details (most publishers will not publish the real horrors) of the conflict, and no justice will be done, and our newspapers will remind us that "we" are right and "they" are wrong, and the difference will be that "they" are doing most of the dying and suffering and "we" are doing most of the killing and profiting.

### THE CASUAL COMFORT OF DISTANT CANADIAN COMPLICITY

"It has an air of inevitability to it", says John Manley, Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a somber, thoughtful way, commenting on the upcoming U.S., British-led invasion of Iraq. Just like he would speak, one presumes, if someone was going to drop a cluster bomb on his kitchen table, while he is eating supper with his family.

### ECONOMICS 101

For the wealthy, peace is less profitable than war.

### THAT "CONTACT" WAS CONQUEST

Michael Enright moderates a CBC radio program on the problems of First Nations peoples in Canada. Enright refers to the first "contact" between the French and English and First Nations. Like the contact between a fist and a face.

As the invited panelists go on and on, they skirt a major underlying issue – this "contact" was racist, imperialist conquest and colonization. English and French Canadians were invaders and colonizers of other peoples and their lands.

Until English and French descendants of the first Europeans can

say that "we" colonized "them" we will not be able to understand and remedy the "problem of the First Nations" because it is not "their" problem, it is "our" problem.

### ACTIVISM IN CANADA

Hockey announcer Ron McLean got dumped by the CBC because they couldn't agree on whether to pay him \$450,000/year, or more. Now, there is a country-wide campaign (phone calls, faxes, emails, etc, to CBC management) to get Ron back onto Hockey Night in Canada.

It is not hard to mobilize people into action; it's simply a matter of what motivates people.

### A DOG'S LIFE

Listeners are informed by the Canadian CBC news service that the "Superpet" store in Thunder Bay sells Hallowe'en costumes for dogs. The interview is fun: chit-chat about cute costumes and funny puppies. Many dogs in North America live better than poor kids in Canada, and really poor kids in Iraq and many countries of the global south.

### "SERVICES RENDERED TO THE STATE"

In the 1970s and 80s, over 250,000 Guatemalans were slaughtered; most were Mayan. In certain regions of the country, genocide was committed. Today, the government of Guatemala is providing compensation to the paramilitary groups (Civil Defense Patrols) that carried out the massacres under orders from the military. The government is paying them for "services rendered to the State".

### INTERNATIONAL AMBULANCE CHASERS

The CBC News (October 16, 2002) interviews a person in Calgary, Canada, who does international "aid" work. In mid-sentence, the CBC interviewer says: "... [so-and-so], who might soon be going to Iraq to do relief work ..."

But wait! The U.S. and British-led 2nd invasion has not yet begun!

The CBC is interviewing an aid and relief expert about post-war humanitarian relief work before the invasion starts!

Why waste time interviewing people working to prevent the next war in Iraq when they can interview people standing by to do the "good" work of mopping up the dead and re-building the soon to be destroyed?

### WE ARE RIGHT-ISM

McCarthyism is back, or Bushism, or just go-get-em-ism. The war is all around and we want it. The media analyzes and reports ... and seemingly wants it. "Aid" organizations are submitting reconstruction proposals to donors even before the destruction and killing begins. Up and coming "war correspondents" just might get their chance. Veteran journalists are searching through old disks, finding reports filed from Desert Storm 1991, to change the names and dates and get ready to publish cutting edge reports about mayhem, killing and destruction.

What's another invasion, killing another 10,000 (Pentagon estimate), when we killed 200,000 Iraqi people in the 1991 Desert Storm invasion, (so long ago - can't barely remember) and U.N. sanctions have killed 1,000,000 or so, according to the U.N. itself?

Either way, we are right-ism.

### "FREE" TRADE, NOT PEOPLE

"Our objective with the Free Trade Area of the Americas is to assure for American corporations control of a territory that runs from the North Pole to the Antarctica, free access, without any hindrance or difficulty for our products, services, technology and capital through the hemisphere". (Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell)



### THE WAY TO IMMORTALITY – EL GRAN HERBERT (THE GREAT HERBERT)

On October 27, 2002, anniversary of the 1987 assassination of her father in San Salvador, Rosa Anaya writes about her Dad, Herbert Anaya, a human rights lawyer:

My dad, "the great Herbert", as my grandfather liked to call him, showed me the way to immortality, a man that I remember for the day of his death, because that is when I met him.

I don't admire Mirna and Herbert because they are my parents; I admire them for what they were willing to give to humanity.

Herbert showed us what it is to serve, and what it means to give your life for others, not physically, because that comes after you have already given all of your essence.

To give your life means exactly that, to offer all of your energies to build a different life, knowing that you are not in agreement with how the world works and yet you offer your life to change it.

He taught us to understand that all of our passions have a reason and you cannot regret them because they are your wisdom. Herbert taught us that human rights are not only read and spoken, but they must also be lived and felt and made to happen.

Herbert was not killed by destiny, or by the government, or the death squad, or guerrillas, or assassins, or injustice. He was not even killed by bullets.

What killed Herbert was the horror of seeing so many children crying, the pain of those who were tortured, the anguish of the mothers of the disappeared, the last breath of those who were killed, and the fear of the hate that exists among brothers and sisters given that we are all sons and daughters of the same human race.

What killed him was the mufe scream of a love song whispered

to the wind in the mountains with bullets as the drum. He was killed by the frustration of screaming a tangible truth to those who didn't want to hear it.

In the end what really killed Herbert was love and passion, given to him by centuries of suffering, by the people that despite their pain always wake up feeling as if they have won one more day, an extra day that many other people do not get to live, those who have an empty stomach, their hearts filled with anguish for their children, yet they are still able to smile, sing, and walk at a slow tired pace.

This is the example that taught Mirna how to forgive, taught her to repeat the eternal echo of forgiveness.

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"The agony of not working for justice is stronger than the possibility of my certain death. The latter is but an instant, the former comprises the totality of my life."

*"La agonía de no trabajar por la justicia es mas fuerte que la posibilidad cierta de mi muerte, lo ultimo es solo un instante, lo otro constituye la totalidad de mi vida."*

(Herbert Anaya, 1987)

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### DEFINITELY NOT MADELEINE ALBRIGHT'S CHILDREN

Madeleine Albright (U.S. Secretary of State) was asked if the death of 500,000 Iraqi children, due to United Nations/U.S. "sanctions" on Iraq, was worth the price. She said: "We think the price is worth it." (60 minutes, May 12, 1996)

### MEMO TO A JOURNALIST BLINDED BY THE RIGHT

Paul Knox, a Canadian journalist, writes (*Globe and Mail*, October 29, 2002): "Despite a decade of market-oriented economic policies, wealth is distributed less equally in Brazil than in almost any other country." Memo to Paul: Wealth and poverty are distributed unjustly in Brazil because of, not despite "free" trade

and privatization policies.

### IRAQ IS "TARGET RICH"

A two inch headline (*Globe and Mail*, October 12, 2002): BOMBING BAGHDAD. In the article the reader learns that Iraq is "target rich".

### WHO IS ERASMO SANCHEZ LAPOP

A landless Maya-Quiche farmer was assassinated on a plantation in southwest Guatemala that exports produce to North American markets. Erasmo had been organizing and educating his community to fight for an 8-hour work day, not 16; a 5-day work week, not 7; a decent salary, not \$2/ day; clean and safe work conditions, not jacked on employer provided stimulants to work longer and harder in miserable conditions. Erasmo was a family and community man, a Mayan man killed by endless repression and exploitation in the new and old world orders.

### MADE IN CANADA - #1 AT "KILLS-AT-A-DISTANCE"

The CBC reports that during U.S.-led military actions in Afghanistan, Canadian sharpshooters located, aimed at and killed an enemy at a distance of over 2 kilometers. A Canadian sharpshooter holds the world record for "kills-at-a-distance".

### THE GLOBAL ECONOMICS OF GASSING KURDS

Did you hear the news? In 1988, when the government of Iraq was gassing Kurds, the U.S. military was providing funds, intelligence and weaponry to Iraq (headed by a man named Saddam Hussein), and the Iraqis were using Swiss jets to gas the Kurds, with jet engines made by Pratt and Whitney of Canada. No, it has not been in the news.

### AS IT SHOULD (NOT) BE - ANYWHERE

(December 15, 2002)

On a night of snowfall  
I walk, bundled, on white streets

snow crunching under my boots,  
homes snuggled.  
All quiet, ambling through the park, over small hills,  
in the wonder full white stuff,  
as it should be,

not like preparing for the next war,  
knowing that powerful people will take decisions  
and unleash awesome killing power, again, like before,  
what will come their way  
is not the soft white stuff  
falling on quiet streets,  
no, none of that.  
What will come their way, again,  
is a torrential downpour of death and destruction,

And, after the bombing stops,  
the real problems begin,  
as hunger, disease and despair seep into every corner of every  
remaining person, hut and neighborhood in Iraq ...  
as it should not be.

### A HARD AND NORMAL LIFE

Carlos Chen is a Mayan-Achi man, from the isolated village of Rio Negro in isolated mountains of Guatemala. His roots go back 1000 years in this region. His community is gone. In 1982, the Guatemalan army barreled through, again and again, killed 440 villagers and destroyed all homes, crops and property.

The Army did this because the villagers refused to be displaced to make way for the Chixoy Dam, funded by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. The U.S.-backed Guatemalan Army said it was defending freedom and democracy and killing communist guerilla fighters.

For "development", "freedom" and "killing Marxist guerillas", Carlos' entire family (pregnant wife and 2 infant children) were massacred.

In 1995, Carlos had remarried and had two young children with his wife Matilde - an activist leader from the nearby village of Nimacabaj. On a Sunday, they would come for lunch. Their baby boys would play with our baby Camila.



Matilde was hit by a bus and killed.

In 1999, Carlos married again ... and carries on his life, caring for his family, fighting for economic and legal justice.

In December 2002, his father-in-law, a Mayan priest, was shot 11 times – dead. His mother-in-law is in hiding.

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#### NOT EVEN THE BIRDS SANG

"When I arrived, I didn't realize what happened.

But when I saw, I wanted to wake from a horrible dream.

Maybe it wasn't true what my eyes were seeing;

my loved ones mutilated, beheaded, throats slit, tortured, raped

...

I asked God to help me. I wanted to be dead in the place of  
my sisters and brothers.

That day was so silent that not even the birds sang."

(Carlos Chen remembers

coming across the massacre scene of his family and community)

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#### AMERICAN DREAM

On December 13, 2002, President George Bush said: "Every day our nation was segregated was a day that America was unfaithful to our founding ideals."

The U.S. was founded by British colonialists who took "North America" from Indigenous peoples by force. The "founding fathers" and elites of the U.S. were white, male, wealthy land-owners - many were slave-owners.

Why can't we say that the "founding ideals" of the U.S. were racist, sexist, classist and imperialist?



### 2003: "Not nearly enough" killed

#### IT IS SO (NOT) FUNNY, YOU GOTTA LAUGH

"Inspectors, who are in Iraq to search for evidence of banned weapons of mass destruction (WMD), could be seen going through the plastic shopping bags of women, some carrying babies or leading children with schoolbags." (*Toronto Star*, January 6, 2003)

Whether we find WMD or not, we are going to bomb the crap (and hundreds of thousands of lives) out of the Iraqi people anyway.

#### WHAT BUTTER\$ CANADA'S BREAD

*Toronto Star* political cartoon (January 9, 2003): U.S. President George Bush and huge tanks rumbling to war in Iraq; Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien in a green Volkswagen bug, with a peace sign, going in the other direction.

Comfortable, but not true.

One American-Canadian difference is the U.S. does not pretend to not want to go to war. Canada pretends it does not like war. Canada is fighting with the U.S. in Afghanistan. Canada enjoys a \$3-5 billion dollar integrated military industry with the U.S. Canadian investors – including the CPP (Canadian Pension Plan) – make good returns investing in the U.S.-Canadian military industry.

War is coming in Afghanistan, and Canada will be there ... even as our media and politicians remind us over and again that we – like Chretien in his VW bus – are peace loving.

**SELECTIVE JOURNALISM**

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the CBC, January 27, 2003)

Today, the CBC presented a detailed report on the crimes and manipulations of the Iraq regime, controlled by Saddam Hussein for many years -- all of which I agree with -- and the CBC chose not to present detailed reporting on:

- the history of economic, military and political relations between the U.S. government, other western governments and companies, with the Hussein regime of the 1980s which used chemical and biological weapons;
- the history of oil-driven European imperialism and interventionism in the Persian Gulf region;
- the death and devastation caused by U.N. "sanctions";
- the illegality of the U.S. and British "over-flights", let alone the loss of life caused by these constant bombing runs.

The CBC interviewed Judith Yaphe, a 20-year C.I.A. expert on Iraq, and did not ask her one question about the role of the C.I.A. in Iraq in the 1980s, when Iraq carried out some of its worst atrocities.

The issues in Iraq, the Persian Gulf, the Middle East and the U.S., Britain and the west, are complex, historical and often brutal. By ignoring western complicity and hypocrisy, the CBC helps create the political and cultural environment in which most Canadians will accept a Canadian role in support of U.S. and British aggression.

**NAME THE GANG RAPE BEFORE IT HAPPENS**

Bernard St. Laurent (The Current radio programme, CBC Radio, January 31, 2003) announces a contest: "Name the War in Iraq Before it Happens." Listeners can email, fax, mail or call in what they would name the upcoming war in Iraq - before it happens.

If/ when the U.S., Britain and others again attack Iraq, it won't be a "war" between two fighting parts; it will be a hi-tech, military assault, the vast majority of victims being Iraqis, like in 1991.

Yet the CBC reduces the war to a "name that tune" game. For the CBC, on-going efforts to avoid the upcoming assault on Iraq are not newsworthy ... attacking Iraq again and widespread killing are foregone conclusions, so lets have fun with it. Imagine a CBC call-in program: "Name the gang-rape before it happens."

**MUZZLE PICASSO, PROMOTE WAR**

Picasso's "Guernica" painting, depicting horrors of war, hangs in the United Nations building, New York City. It was covered by a blue cloth when U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell came to the U.N. to lie about Iraq's WMD and extol the virtues of bombing Iraq.

**WITH "DEMOCRACY" LIKE THIS ... WHO NEEDS OPPRESSION**

(Unresponded to Letter to "The Current", CBC Radio, February 13, 2003)

I am trying to appreciate CBC's efforts to explore U.S. efforts to "bring democracy" to countries around the world, but the underlying premise of the investigation (that the U.S. wants to bring democracy to other countries and people) is nonsensical.

Today, I listened with dismay to your coverage of the 1989 U.S. "Just Cause" invasion of Panama. In 1990, I went to Panama 4 times (working as a human rights lawyer with the Central American Human Rights Commission), interviewing and documenting the "other side of the story" - countering the biased, pro-U.S. invasion message presented by the mainstream North American media - speaking with family members of Panamanian civilians who were killed and assassinated by invading U.S. armed forces.

Many people interviewed were opposed to the previously U.S.-backed regime of Noriega, which the U.S. invaded to oust. I attended the exhumations of two mass graves wherein U.S. marines had illegally dumped the bodies of hundreds of Panamanian civilians killed by the U.S. armed forces. Nothing ever came of these crimes; the exhumations were not covered in the North American media, despite being widely documented.

Get a copy of *The Panama Deception*, a 90-minute, Academy Award winning documentary about the Just Cause invasion, looking closely at the history of the U.S. and the Panamanian military, the history of the U.S. and Noriega, etc. It also looks closely at how the mainstream U.S. media misled the public about that short and brutal invasion.

Ah well, here again you have my 2-cents worth. The killing goes on in Iraq. Canada supports it. As in the cases of Panama, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Chile, etc., we are being fed the same justifications - "promoting democracy," "defending the well-being



of the people", "getting rid of brutal regimes", etc. – for why we have to kill so many people.

### "AMERICAN BASTARDS"

In the Canadian media, there is a furor over the "American Bastards" comments of a Canadian member of parliament who disagrees with U.S. policies and actions in Iraq.

When my child comes home from school and tells me that someone called her a bad name, I might tell her to go back to that person and tell them: "U.S. Smart Bombs and U.N. sanctions may break my bones, but names won't hurt me."

### "WMI"

The media reports this morning that U.S. forces swooped in on an Iraqi primary school and detained teacher Mohammed al-Hazar. Sources indicate that, when arrested, al-Hazar was in possession of a ruler, a protractor, a set square and a calculator.

When presented with this information, U.S. President George W. Bush concluded that this constituted clear and overwhelming evidence that Iraq possessed WMI - weapons of math instruction. (Anonymous)

### "NOT NEARLY ENOUGH" KILLED

North on Bay Street, I bike with my "Iraqi Body Count" protest sign slung over my back, indicating how hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed thus far. A young man leans out the window of an Audi sports coup, and shouts "Not nearly enough". (March 30, 2003)

### COLLATERAL DAMAGE AND KINDNESS

Ali, a 12-year old Iraqi boy, lost his arms, most of his family, home and childhood to U.S./British bombs. Collateral damage.

Found by U.S./British soldiers on a "mop-up" mission, Ali was flown to Kuwait to get medical treatment. Ever since the story made

the news, the British Red Cross has been inundated with cash donations from citizens (British taxpayers and voters whose country is dropping the bombs) for Ali's medical care ... plus requests for adoption. British newspapers compete for the right to pay for his medical care.

Here is how it works: Plan and carry out mass killing, destruction and brutality; coddle and cradle a victim on the front-page news.

Where is Ali today? What does he feel about his saviors? Who are his saviors?

### OUR MAN IN GUATEMALA

The U.S. State Department has issued a statement, saying the U.S. would find it difficult to work with former General Efraim Rios Montt were he to become President.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Rios Montt planned and oversaw part of the genocide in Guatemala, wiping out Mayan communities with U.S. and western support (funds, weaponry, training, military "intelligence", political legitimization, etc.).

### WHY KYONG HAE LEE DIED IN MEXICO

(At yet another summit ...)

In Cancun, Mexico, the rich and powerful of the world (heads of State, CEOs of companies and banks, some rock "stars" probably) met in 5-star hotels by the beaches, surrounded by Mexican police and soldiers, to discuss how to lock in a "free" trade agreement of the Americas.

Outside the compound, tens of thousands of people - low income and down-right poor from across the Americas - protest the exploitative economic model that the people in the 5-star hotels work to keep in place.

A man climbs on the fence erected by the police and stabs a knife in his heart and dies. Kyong Hae Lee was a farmer from Korea, and this was his protest against an unjust global order.

## NOT ROCKET SCIENCE

On CBC Radio's "The Current", Anna Marie Tremonte asks a reporter in Vancouver: "Why is Vancouver having such a problem with homelessness?" The reporter begins her answer: "Well, people are not really sure ..."

## 14,000

This is the number of security forces spread around London to protect President George Bush during a visit with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Queen to explain the need to bomb for "democracy" and "freedom".

## NUMBERS ABOUT OUR GLOBAL ORDER

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), "The 10 richest men on the planet, own wealth equivalent to the value of the total production of 50 countries; 447 multi-millionaires own a greater fortune than the annual income of half of humanity. ... Developing countries send developed countries 10 times as much money, through unequal trade and financial relations, as they receive in foreign aid." (Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down: Primer for a Looking-Glass World*, 1998)

## REMEMBRANCE DAY – OURS, NOT THEIRS

Across North America, activities are held to commemorate the loss of life of our soldiers (men, women, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters), not *their* soldiers (men, women, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters).

In death, suffering and mourning, we perpetuate the "us" and "them", which leads to the wars.

## SAD THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN HONDURAS

(Email from Bertha Caceres, December 24, 2003)

"I will tell you another sad thing. On Sunday the 21st, at 11pm, in Cadelaria, Lempira, they assassinated a great friend of COPINH, Matilde Martinez. He was cut to pieces by machetes. You met him

during the protests. We are trying to demand the investigation, but that never happens. He leaves behind 8 or 9 children. It is sad what happens here in Honduras."

## "[PIGS] OF THE WILLING"

(Economics 101 primer: Bomb, kill and destroy, maybe bury the dead ... and make profits getting rebuilding and reconstruction contracts.

The U.S. government has said that only companies and investors from "coalition of the willing" countries can apply for billions of "rebuilding Iraq" dollars.

The Canadian government is indignant and the media aghast. They argue that Canadian companies and investors should also be able to bid for and receive some of the billions of dollars in rebuilding contracts ... to help surviving Iraqis, of course.

## UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND POVERTY IS GOOD

After winning another round of golf, and pushing career winnings to over \$40,000,000 (not tallying endorsement "earnings"), a smiling Tiger Woods says: "I like inflation."

A Toronto family spends \$90,000 building a temporary back-yard rink for their children to play hockey in the winter.

The Queen Mary II sails from Southampton. Biggest cruise ship yet. Top berth, \$48,000 a trip.

## GOTTA CHUCKLE

President Bush was visiting an elementary school. After speaking for 10 minutes, he said, "I have 15 minutes and will answer any questions you have." Bobby stood up and said: "I have three questions:

1. How did Bush win the election with fewer votes than Gore?
2. Why haven't you caught Osama bin Laden?
3. Where are the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?"



President Bush, looking a little uncomfortable, whispered into the ear of the principal, standing close by, who then made a quick phone call. Just then the bell went off and the kids were sent out early to play. Upon returning, President Bush said: "I am sorry we were interrupted. I will now answer any questions you have." A little girl called Julie stood up and said: "I have five questions:

1. How did Bush win the election with fewer votes than Gore?
2. Why haven't you caught Osama bin Laden?
3. Where are the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?
4. Why did the bell ring 10 minutes early?
5. Where is Bobby?"



## 2004: "Book of Condolences"

### HAITI

*The more I learn more about Latin America history, the more I conclude that the majority poor of Haiti are the people in the Americas that perhaps have most suffered injustice, inequality and poverty since the invasion of the Europeans ... and particularly since 1804 when African slaves revolted, threw out their French colonial slave-owning masters, and established their own republic.*

*The repression and poverty have always been caused by Haiti's elites in collusion with the governments and private sector interests of the U.S.A. and France, and more recently Canada.*

### ACTION PACKED SCRIPT

On the same night as the Oscar Awards in Hollywood, France, Canada and the U.S. supported a military coup in Haiti, forcing President Aristide out of the country, setting in motion an action-packed script that will include the killing of thousands.

### CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY: MORE HAITIANS TO BE KILLED

Yesterday, Colin Powell, U.S. Secretary of State, said 'It is time for President Aristide of Haiti to step down'. Today, on cue, Bill Graham, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, said "It is time for

Aristide [President of Haiti] to go."

The city of Toronto's annual municipal budget is \$7 billion/ year for a population of less than 3 million people who are by and large relatively well off. Haiti's budget is \$400 million, for a country of 10 million mostly impoverished people. The Haitian people have twice elected President Aristide.

Why are rich and powerful nations pushing the democratically elected Aristide out, again, like in the early 1990s? Why will thousands of Haitians be assassinated and tortured, again?

### SOURCES OF IGNORANCE AND COMPLICITY

Now that the Haitian coup has been hatched and the widespread killing reprised, North Americans are being inundated by misleading news about Haitian history and people:

Canada's *Globe and Mail* teaches the reader: "He brought it on himself. [President] Jean Bertrand Aristide's fall from power yesterday was mainly the result of his own misrule." (March 1, 2004) Andy Berry, of *CBC Radio Toronto*, wonders: "So, how was it that Aristide so failed his people?"

North Americans are not being inundated with news about: Canadian, U.S. and French support for the military coup; about the first coup against Aristide was in 1991, followed by brutal repression; about how a majority of Haitians voted Aristide twice into power; about how the Inter-American Development Bank illegally cut off hundreds of millions of dollars in funding for Aristide's government; about how the U.S. military trained and armed rebels in the Dominican Republic ... about anything related to the truth.

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"If you are not careful,  
the press will have you hating the people being repressed  
and loving the people doing the repressing."

(Malcolm X)

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### "EXECUTIVE OUTCOMES"

Sounding like the title of an essay for a 1<sup>st</sup> year university business course, Executive Outcomes is the name of a company that hires mercenaries across the world to achieve military and "security" objectives. The privatization of war: lives executed, profits made.

### BOOKS OF CONDOLENCES

Across the planet, books of condolences, *libros de condolencias*, are opened for 200 Spaniards killed by terrorist attacks in Spain. Recently opened were condolence books for the victims of 9-11; before that, for Princess Diana. Very good things, these books – enabling people to express sadness and grief.

Have you ever seen a book of condolences for the:

victims of the European Slave Trade ...

victims of European colonialism in Africa, Asia and Latin America ...

decimated Indigenous populations of the planet ...

the tens of millions of victims of AIDS in Africa ...

millions of victims of western-backed military regimes across Africa and Latin America?

### NASA ARCHIVE: A NAVAJO ELDER'S MESSAGE FOR THE MOON

"When NASA was preparing for the Apollo Project, it took the astronauts to a Navajo reservation in Arizona for training.

"One day, a Navajo elder and his son came across the space crew walking among the rocks. The elder, who spoke only Navajo, asked a question. His son translated for the NASA people: "What are these guys in the big suits doing?" One of the astronauts said that they were practicing for a trip to the moon. When his son relayed this comment the Navajo elder got all excited and asked if it would be possible to give to the astronauts a message to deliver to the moon.

"Recognizing a promotional opportunity when he saw one, a NASA official accompanying the astronauts said, "Why certainly!" and told an underling to get a tape recorder. The Navajo elder's comments into the microphone were brief.



"The NASA official asked the son if he would translate what his father had said. The son listened to the recording and laughed uproariously. But he refused to translate. So the NASA people took the tape to a nearby Navajo village and played it for other members of the tribe. They too laughed long and loudly but also refused to translate the elder's message to the moon.

"Finally, an official government translator was summoned. After he finally stopped laughing the translator relayed the message: "Watch out for these pricks. They have come to steal your land." (Anonymus)

### REAL LIFE ART

In a global order characterized by inequality and injustice, the two genocide cases working their ways through the Guatemalan courts, slowly (lots of impunity for the powerful sectors) and at great risk to the witnesses and lawyers (lots of guns in the hire of the powerful sectors), are works of human art.

### APOCALYPSE NOW

In the brutal cauldron of the U.S.-led war in Iraq, Iraqi militants hang American body parts on bridges. Our media and politicians cry out: "The horror, the horror" and agree that more money is needed to arm more Americans to kill more Iraqis, in the name of stopping the killing and the horror. A U.S. official: "We will pacify them."

### STUDID IS AS STUPID DOES

"I don't think he is stupid. I think we're stupid, because if we weren't, he wouldn't talk to us this way." (Jon Stewart, *Daily Show*, on President George Bush)

### THE USE OF SOCCER FIELDS IN IRAQ

Front page photo (*Globe and Mail*, April 12, 2004): a soccer field in Fallujah (Iraq) converted into a burial ground; rows and mounds of killed Iraqis. Now, there is a cease-fire between U.S. forces and Iraqi nationalists in Fallujah. Survivors bury their dead and flee.

The U.S. reports that most of the 900 killed last week were "fighters". Actually, most were the elderly, children and women, as reported by Iraqi doctors who were trying to stem the massive dying of Iraqis that goes on and on.

### WHY WE LIKE "INDIANS"

In Forest, Ontario, the "Ipperwash Inquiry" investigates the killing of Anthony Dudley George in the Ipperwash Provincial Park, on September 6, 1995. Dudley was a member of the First Nations people of Stoney and Kettle Point; they have ancestors buried in the Park. Dudley was shot by the police while peacefully occupying the park, protesting that it should not be made into a golf course.

Clifford George, a cousin of Dudley, testifies at the Inquiry. "He [Clifford] and his two brothers went overseas to fight for Canada, in World War II, and returned to find that the government had taken away their home at Stony Point." (*Globe and Mail*, April 19, 2004)

### THE MYTH OF SOVEREIGNTY

"White House says Iraq Sovereignty could be limited". (*New York Times* headlines, April 23, 2004) What sovereignty?

### "LOST" INDIANS

(Letter to a Journalist - He responded!)

Dear Larry Oakes, I read your *Minnesota Star Tribune* article (April 25, 2004) on the "Lost Youth of Leech Lake". Congratulations. In Canada and the U.S.A., our mainstream culture and media need much more of this reporting.

My comment is that you did not provide enough information about European imperialism, racism and conquest that led directly and indirectly to many of our First Nations peoples living in such horrendous conditions today.

We don't have an "Indian" problem in North America. We have a complex problem of imperialism, conquest and racism that has, over time, resulted in the status quo we have today.

First Nations peoples have a lot of work to do to address and remedy their "ills", but in the measure that mainstream North American society does not address how we contribute, historically and on-going, to their ills, "we" will continue to see "them" as the authors of their own misery and "they" will continue to seek remedies to these ills in on-going conditions of oppression, discrimination and a fundamental lack of understanding.

### A FEW BAD APPLES

Across the world, news reports and photos are published: U.S. and British soldiers and officers "abusing" (not "torturing") Iraqi prisoners. Our media and politicians kick into damage control. Officials are aghast at the actions of a "few bad apples" in our ranks.

### WHAT CAN ONE SAY

"Iraqis are sick of foreign people coming in their country and trying to destabilize their country, and we will help them rid Iraq of these killers." (President George W. Bush, on *Al Arabiya* TV)

### "A SUNDAY AT THE POOL IN KINGALI"

Driving through the mountains of Guatemala's genocide, I read *A Sunday at the Pool in Kingali* (by Gil Courtemanche) about genocide in Rwanda. Courtemanche quotes Albert Camus: "I no longer wish to be happy, just to be aware."

### NOT "BRITAIN'S FIRST ETHNIC CLEANSING"

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Globe and Mail*)

Thank you for publishing Lyse Doucet's July 31, 2004 article "'We're Born Again'". It is important to set the historical record straight about the history of *les Acadiens*. As Ms. Doucet correctly wrote: "Victors write history". If past abuses (in this case, the 1755 forced expulsion by the British of thousands of Acadians from what is now known as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) go unchallenged and unaddressed, they are more likely to repeat in the future.

I regret the article did not address the history of European

imperialism against the First Nations of what is now known as "the Americas", including the devastating impact of the French and English in what is now known as "Canada", including the devastating impact of the French in what is now known as l'Acadie.

In her article, Ms. Doucet obliquely refers to stories (of relations between *les Acadiens* and the Mi'kmaq) that the "Doucet aunts" did not want to talk about ... and then the author did not go on to explore those issues!

Ms. Doucet quotes Warren Perrin: the British expulsion of the Acadians was "Britain's first ethnic cleansing". This is false. By 1755, the British and French had just completed generations of ethnic cleansing – perhaps genocide – of the Indigenous peoples of what are now known as "North America" and the "Caribbean".

While true that the Acadians were the losers, in the back and forth battles of the imperialist European powers, we know that "victors write history" and the descendants and beneficiaries of European imperialism – be they French or English – have never come to full and proper terms about our history of ethnocide and genocide we carried out against the real First Nations.

### AN AGGRESSIVE EVIL EMPIRE

There is a new evil empire for the U.S. to dislike – Venezuela. The CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) does its part to justify U.S. aggression. In a one-sided radio report (April 29, 2004), Connie Watson asks an anti-President Chavez interviewee "Why is Chavez so confrontational with the U.S.?"

According to this line of questioning, the following nations have been confrontational with the U.S.: Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Dominican Republic and Chile; Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala many times; Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria regularly; the Congo, Angola, Mozambique...

### MINING AND CANADIAN STANDARDS

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Toronto Star*, October 24, 2004)

The *Toronto Star* (editorial, "Review Noranda Sale", October 24,



2004) calls for a review of the proposed Chinese government purchase of Noranda Inc. This deal "has rightly raised worries about the consequences of a company controlled by a foreign ... government ...", a major concern being "whether Canadians are willing to lose control over our mining industry".

I have as yet to read an editorial expressing concern about how hundreds of Canadian companies enrich themselves and do business with repressive, oligarchic regimes across the globe, dominating and sometimes outright owning their resource sectors.

A reminder: Noranda had extensive copper mining operations in Chile during the repressive years of General Augusto Pinochet years.

#### **REGULAR REMINDERS: UNLIMITED WEALTH ACCUMULATION IS GOOD**

The *Toronto Star* (April 29, 2004) publishes an article, with color photos, about the \$15,000,000 home of Marvin and Gisele Manunula; that Microsoft Canada President Frank Clegg had his home listed at \$29,000,000...

#### **"HOW NUMBING IT BECOMES"**

After receiving a Rights Action urgent action about the August 31 killing of 6 *campesinos* at the Nueva Linda for-export plantation in Guatemala, a supporter wrote: "I read this and thought it was old news ... How numbing it becomes."

Old news: With an eviction order easily acquired by a foreign landowner, 800 police, backed by armored vehicles and helicopters, violently evicted 1500 poor families. Some people were executed after detention. Dozens were wounded and overcome by tear-gas. Huts and survival crops were burned. The elderly and children were illegally detained. Journalists were beaten and their cameras taken. The Guatemalan human rights ombudsman received testimony that police beat an elderly person to death, jumped on the cadaver and shouted "Victory, Victory."

A government Minister said that this eviction could be "an example" for thousands of other landless *campesinos* across the country.

#### **"LIVES OF SLAVERY"**

Guatemalan Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini was asked "What is the problem with land in Guatemala?"

"It is a problem that dates back to the period of colonialism. The large *latifundios* (for-export plantations) have only benefited the owners. It is a system of land ownership that favors slavery. I have visited *fincas* (for-export plantations) in the department of San Marcos and I can tell you the people live there in a feudal system. People on the *fincas* live lives of slavery. They receive very low salaries because they are not owners of the land. They work from the time they get up, until night falls, without ever seeing the benefits of their work. They are condemned to do the same thing as their parents and grandparents and their children will do the same." (*Prensa Libre*, July 11, 2004)

Bishop Ramazzini regularly receives death threats; people dear to him have been attacked and harmed.

#### **GUATEMALAN "PEACE"**

The Nueva Linda killing of 6 *campesinos*, on a for-export plantation on the south-west coast of Guatemala, was no "tragedy". It was predictable in a country where there is no commitment to land reform, no commitment to ending exploitation, where impunity for the powerful is the norm.

These killings are not a set-back to the "Peace Process". Repression and impunity, systemic exploitation and poverty define the Peace Process. "We are in a 'post-conflict' country with the same underlying causes that gave origin to the conflict." (Community leader, Rights Action forum, September 2004)

#### **ANATOMY OF A MASS KILLING**

On the south coast of Guatemala, a wealthy land-owner ordered hired thugs to disappear a community leader in September 2003. There were witnesses, so petitions were filed in the courts, and nothing happened. The community leader remained "disappeared", so

community members occupied the land of the wealthy owner, so 800 police showed up with a "court order", backed by armored vehicles and helicopters, to put an end to an "illegal" land occupation, but not to locate the disappeared community member, and not to inquire about the exploitation and poverty of the workers, and before you could say justice or death (*justicia o muerte*), 6 poor campesinos were shot dead, 4 seriously wounded, and 31 jailed for the "illegal" land occupation.

### GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND POVERTY

The Central American Nutrition Institute reports that 50% of Guatemalans survive and die on \$1/day. (*Prensa Libre*, September 9, 2004)

### BEDS THAT FEEL SO GOOD

After singing a song to my children, Camila, drifting to sleep, says "Oh, this bed feels so good." I linger and offer a prayer: That all children may fall tired and happy to sleep, every night, well fed, warm and comfy.

### CANADIAN "GENEROSITY"

CBC Television interviews Canada's Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew. He has traveled to Haiti to ensure that Haitians properly spend "Canada's generosity", as Pettigrew refers to funds Canada provided after Haiti was devastated by two hurricanes.

In February 2004, Canada supported the coup to oust the democratic government of Haiti. Now, Canada supports the post-coup, illegitimate regime that is carrying out a campaign of killings against people that elected the ousted government.

Canadian companies operate *maquiladora* sweat shops in Haiti. Canada supports the "free trade" model of development that exploits and oppresses Haiti's impoverished majority, who then elect a government to stop the exploitation and oppression, that we then help overthrow.

### NOTHING (NON) POLITICAL ABOUT (IN)JUSTICE

Email From: M  
Sent: Tuesday, November 02, 2004  
To: Grahame, Rights Action  
Subject: article by Michael Moore

Dear Grahame, when I talked with you on the flight from Guatemala, I didn't realize Rights Action was a political organization. From our discussion, I thought it was a non-political organization concerned with the same issues of justice with which I'm concerned. I have appreciated reading your e-newsletters, and admire what you are doing.

Until I read this article by Michael Moore. It appears that you have a strong political orientation, and I am very uncomfortable with that. I find nothing to admire about Michael Moore. In fact, he represents much of what I fear about trends in morality and character in this country. There is nothing noble about this man. When I see him on television wearing a cap, I wonder why he never learned basic manners and respect.

If you have a political agenda, you could have found a more admirable person to state your case, like Joe Lieberman or Joe Biden, but why Michael Moore?

This is from a friend who is very supportive of what you are doing in the field of human rights, but one who is troubled with your political agenda and your choice of a spokesperson like Michael Moore.

== =

Email To: M  
Sent: Wednesday, November 03, 2004  
From: Grahame, Rights Action  
Subject: article by Michael Moore

Dear M, Greetings and thanks for taking the time to write. We may need another 3 hour flight to work some of these issues out. Rights Action does not endorse Moore's views and Moore is not a spokesperson for Rights Action. We send information to our email list to add to debate and discussion. There are some of Moore's views I agree with/ some I don't. You will find the same thing with the Arundhati Roy and John Pilger articles we sent around. We aim to distribute opinions that get less play in the mainstream



media.

I have no problem with Moore's cap or dress code. In my years of work in Central America, the most admirable people I have met are the poorest, many of whom have suffered and survived repression and torture, who never could afford new clothes, let alone have regular access to potable water, decent housing, etc. Some of the people I most feared were extremely well dressed, educated and articulate.

Rights Action is not a "political" organization in the way you use the term. We subscribe to no political party or ideology. But -- as we make clear to any foundation, donor, organization or person interested in our work -- the issues we work on in Central America (exploitation and poverty/repression, impunity and injustice/racial discrimination/enviro-destruction) are political issues.

Issues of poverty (which comes from exploitation), environmental destruction, human rights violations, justice and injustice are by definition political issues that have to do with power and power abuse inside countries and between nations.

In our in-flight conversation, I mentioned a book by Eduardo Galeano (*Open Veins of Latin America*). If you read it, you may disagree with some/a lot of it. You and I spoke about trade and development economics. I am critical of "development" economics, and "free" trade.

My point is that the development/economic model is a political issue. The development model has to do with wealth and power (inside nations/and between) and that people, companies, banks, countries, push for a certain development model because they have agendas, often self-centered and greedy.

So, Rights Action has a political agenda, but not the one you are suggesting. Ours is an agenda based on full respect for all human rights, on community-controlled development models and projects, on healthy systems of rule of law and democratic participation, on respect for and protection of the environment.

With respect and fond memories of a great in-flight conversation ...  
... Grahame

### "NICE" THINGS IN FALLUJAH

"We're going to smack the crap out of them. That would be nice." (*Toronto Star* headline, November 9, 2004, quoting a U.S. Marine about the military assault of Fallujah, Iraq)

### THE NEVER ENDING NON-ENDING OF WARS

"Thursday is a legal holiday here in the U.S. - Veteran's Day, once known as Armistice Day, observing the end of World War I. We don't have holidays for the end of all our wars or no one would ever go to work." (November 10, 2004, email from Paul Magno)

### "SHOOT THEM AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER"

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Toronto Star*)

From the *Toronto Star* (November 13, 2004), we learn that Prime Minister Paul Martin is flying to Haiti "to pull together different sectors of Haitian society" to try and resolve the political problems that beset the island.

In this way, Canada pretends to play honest broker - a friendly, wealthy, powerful neighbor, coming to help less fortunate friends resolve their problems.

The Primer Minister's efforts will fail. Canada is neither an outsider nor an honest broker.

In 1991, Canada acquiesced as the U.S. supported a bloody coup that ousted the elected government of Haiti (President Aristide's first government), followed by three years of repression killing thousands of "Aristide supporters." No justice was done for that coup or the killings and human rights violations.

In February 2004, Canada - beyond acquiescence - supported and legitimized a second violent coup, forcing the elected government of Haiti (Aristide's second government) from office. Many military personnel and business elites from the 1991 coup participated in the 2004 coup. The newly imposed regime is again carrying out a campaign of repression against "Aristide supporters".

"Shoot them and ask questions later," said Jean Philippe Sassine,

now the assistant mayor of Port-au-Prince, appointed by de facto leader Gerard Lafortue. "Right now our country needs security. Unless you clean up the bad people ... there will be no progress. It will be a massacre; people will die. But let us do it or it will be worse."

The most important thing Canada could do is hold an international inquiry into the 2004 coup, examining the role of the U.S.A., Canada and France, and the role of those sectors in Haiti (political and economic sectors, as well as the armed forces and paramilitaries) that carried out and benefited from the coup, as well as the role of the United Nations that did nothing to prevent the coup and then legitimized it by working directly with the installed regime.

### SUICIDE IS A CANADIAN LEGACY

The CBC (November 15, 2004) reports that suicide rates amongst the Innu communities of Labrador are 20 times the national rates. The CBC report makes no mention of European colonial legacy issues of invasion, oppression, dispossession, discrimination and ultimately self-destruction. Listeners are left to lament these awful things and wonder why "those Indians" do so much harm to themselves?

### PARTY OF THE YEAR

Antigua is the "Forest Hills" or "Beverly Hills" of Guatemala, an exclusive town for wealthy Guatemalans, including mass murderers, and for hundreds of thousands of tourists.

The U.S. Ambassador, a dozen American Senators and many well-heeled invitees from the "international community" and Guatemalan oligarchy have shown up at the home of General Efraim Rios Montt - part-time gospel preacher, former President of Congress, former student of the School of the Americas, former head of the Army, former planner and executor of genocide against Mayan people - to attend the wedding of his daughter Zury to a U.S. Republican senator.

In the Guatemala court system, advancing not even at a snail's pace, are two genocide cases against Rios Montt and other former military and political leaders, ... but that is not what this afternoon is about. Besides, the "war against communism" was

hard and they were mostly poor Mayan people who were killed (over 250,000), so ... why spoil a lovely afternoon?

### DISPLACED, NORTH AND SOUTH

In Rabinal, Guatemala, I hike up a small mountain to sit in the remains of Kajyup, an ancient Mayan-Achi village. I pray for a global human community governed by equality, justice and balance with mother earth. I am a Canadian, of European descent, up-rooted in the present and past of wealth and poverty, conquer and oppression, finding peace of mind in an ancient village of the Mayan people ravaged by European imperialism.

### WHO SHOULD GIVE THANKS

In Rabinal, some people say "*gracias Grajam, gracias a Derechos en Accion*" (Thank you Grahame, thank you Rights Action) for supporting their development, environment and human rights projects. I say: "It is we who thank you for surviving repression, exploitation and discrimination, with your humanity intact, and for working endlessly for a decent global, human order."

### WHERE AND WHAT IS HAITI

How do you get to Haiti from here? Not like in a plane or on a boat. How do you really get there? ... unless you spend 200 years, first, as a member of a people exploited, discriminated and repressed by their own minority elite in cahoots with the business sectors and governments of the U.S., Canada and France?

### FORGIVENESS AND HEALING IN CANADA

"Your churches, your governments and your military did away with our people. ... More than all the world wars put together, that has never been addressed. ... I am willing to work on forgiveness, I'm still working on it, but I want to tell you something: I will never forget what my people have suffered." (Bruce Elijah, at the lpperwash inquiry into the shooting death of Indigenous man Dudley George, killed September 6, 1995, by Ontario police, while protecting a burial ground sacred to Indigenous people at Stoney Point, near Lake Huron)



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"Healing's only going to be accomplished  
once everybody accepts responsibility.

Once that is done, then the healing can take place."

(Dudley George's brother Sam, *Toronto Star*, December 29, 2004)

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### BUSH'S "BASE"

In the documentary movie *Fahrenheit 911*, there is a clip of President Bush giving a speech to a room of very wealthy people. Smiling, he says: "Some people call you the elites; I call you ... (he pauses, smiling) ... my base."

Watch this one scene  
over and over  
and over and over  
and you will begin to understand  
how the global order works.

### A HUMAN THING IN THE U.S.A. ... and in Iraq

"Each death in Iraq blows a hole in a family and sets off concentric circles of grief that touch everyone else who knew and cared for the fallen soldier," wrote columnist Bob Herbert (*New York Times*, December 2004) about the families of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq. True, and obviously true about many more times dead in Iraq (moms and dads, brothers and sisters, grand-kids and parents), though not mentioned in Herbert's article.

### DEMOCRACY IN A PLACE CALLED "FALLUJAH"

In the news, a spokesperson for Iraq's "interim" government hopes that people returning to the city of Fallujah will put the recent past behind them and vote in democratic elections in January. The U.S. just completed a military assault in Fallujah, allegedly used chemical warfare, killed hundreds of civilians, destroyed homes, water and electrical systems and religious centers.

Now they should be ready to vote.

### THE HAITIAN PEOPLE SAY NO AND YES

The Haiti Information Project writes:

"A majority of Haiti's people elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide president in 2000 to serve out a five-year term ... only to see him ousted in a February 2004 coup by the Haitian oligarchy, the U.S.A., France and Canada. Much the same happened in 1991.

"December 31, 2004, in the Bel Air shanty-town, began in a small dusty room off the street of Delmas 2. "Combatants" - a name for people demanding the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide - patrolled the area; others painted signs demanding his return, demanding the rights of the poor.

"Despite previous killings by U.S. Marines, U.N. "peacekeepers" and the Haitian police, the citizens of Bel Air showed the courage of their convictions by taking to the streets yet again.

"A spokesman stated, "Since the Haitian police [backed by the U.N.], attacked our peaceful demonstration on September 30, we have said no. Even though they call us bandits on the radio we understand the campaign of social exclusion and that they want to hide the fact that 70% of the population are calling for Aristide's return.

"Today they talk about reconciliation, yet more than 3,000 within Lavalas (pro-Aristide popular movement) have been murdered; they reward the former military that are responsible with large checks and they give them jobs in the police. They imprisoned our leaders or forced them into exile. Our children have no schools. We have no decent housing and we have no way of securing a life for the majority of the poor who elected Aristide president. They do not represent us. They will never represent us as long as this injustice continues.

"We would rather die with dignity than in our current misery without justice. This is the only honor as citizens of a free and independent Haiti we have left to us. To die for our independence and what we believe in.

"The constitution must be respected. We played the game fair and voted for our president. Aristide must be returned or the U.N. and the U.S. must kill us all. We will never betray the democratic principal they [the "International Community"] taught us if

supreme in the land. One man equals one vote and we elected Aristide as the president of Haiti. They are the ones who taught us our vote counts and we will never forget."



## 2005: Global Priorities

### WORDS WE HIDE BEHIND

(Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the *Toronto Star*)

I write concerning Linda McQuaig's "The poor haven't changed ..." article (January 2, 2005). "Underprivileged", "privileged" and "lucky" are incorrect words to describe how our economic system works.

"Luck" has something to do with the newborn baby's perspective. For example, lucky you were born white and male in "Forest Hills" or "Beverly Hills" in a "first" world country; unlucky you were born female and brown in "Cite de Soleil" in a "third" world country.

And there are many variations of "luck" or "bad luck" in between, as babies have nothing to do with creating and keeping in place the unjust, unequal world they were born into.

But "luck" and "bad luck" stop here. "Luck" has little to do with how our economic-political-military system works. The global nation-state system is unequal by its very nature – inside and between nations. It operates with differing amounts of inherent exploitation, oppression and injustice, from the local to the global levels.

We don't want a global order wherein billionaires, millionaires and hundred-thousands-of-dollars-aires have "sympathy and generosity" towards the poor. Lauding noblesse oblige and "white man's burden" enables us to not ask about inequality and injustice, about why the rich are rich and the poor are poor.

We want to create and celebrate a society where there are no



"poor" and, therefore, there are no "rich". That is what we are working for.

### "WORLD LEADERS"

"China's military might worries world leaders" states the bold headline of the *Globe and Mail*. "China has become powerful enough ... to challenge ... U.S. dominance in the Pacific region."

Who are these "leaders"? Of what "world" does the *Globe and Mail* speak? Let us read between the lines ...

The concern of the *Globe and Mail* is not the global power and domination of the U.S., along with European nations, Canada and Australia, but that an up-until-now weaker nation might gain power and domination. The problem for the *Globe and Mail* is not that of power accumulation, domination and abuse, but of WHO accumulates the power and uses it for domination.

### A HAITIAN MAN

(by Jim Defede, *Miami Herald*, February 22, 2005)

"For 10 days in November, Thomas Griffin traveled throughout the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince. It was his 10th trip to Haiti in a decade and his most horrifying.

"The inhumanity that is happening just off our shores is appalling," said Griffin, a Philadelphia attorney and former Justice Department official who has been investigating human rights abuses in Haiti and Latin America for years. The pictures, the words, the statements by those who are both for and against the return of Aristide speak for themselves in this report. "There is a feeling of a truly repressive war against the poor," Griffin said.

"Inep Henri, 35, had been shot in the head, but his family did not want to take him to the hospital, for fear of the police. Griffin and his team convinced the family it was necessary or Henri would die. The Red Cross refused to send an ambulance, so Griffin's team arranged a pickup truck to carry Henri out of Bel Air. They had to pretend Henri was dead in order to get through a police checkpoint.

"Two hours after Henri arrived at the city's general hospital,

Griffin's team found him "still alive on a cot, but having received no treatment", the report notes. Investigators convinced doctors to examine him. One doctor got up, slapped Inep in the head to see if he was awake, and then pinched his upper arm for a reaction. Inep was still alive. The doctor went back behind his desk to sit.

"As Griffin learned, doctors would only treat Henri if his family paid in advance. Henri died the next day, never having been treated." And the report ([www.law.miamiedu/news/368.html](http://www.law.miamiedu/news/368.html)) goes on and on ..."

### FALLING BOMBS, RISING STOCKS

CBC radio (April 25, 2005) interviewed a representative from a Canadian company, Ceramic Protection Corporation, whose stock is rising. Ceramic Protection makes flak jackets to help protect the lives of U.S. soldiers who are killing many people in many countries who are dying because, amongst other reasons, they are not wearing bullet or bomb resistant clothes.

### "FREE" TRADE, FREE PROPAGANDA

Opening a story about poverty in Mexico, Jane Haughton (CBC News, April 25, 2005) reports: "There is no doubt that NAFTA has helped the Mexican economy ..."

Of course there is doubt. A reporter could easily find Mexicans – "experts" – who would explain how the economy is getting worse. The CBC seemingly hires people to repeat things the Canadian government wants Canadians to believe: "Free trade" is good.

### MISERY AND SUFFERING ARE NO "TRAGEDY"

"Iraqis Still Living in Misery" reads the *Toronto Star* headline (May 13, 2005). The article details how bad life is today for the Iraqi majority. With no mention of the number of Iraqis killed – over 1,000,000 – due to the U.S.-led invasions and sanctions since 1990, the reader learns:

"85 per cent of Iraqis complain of frequent power outages";  
"only 54 percent have access to clean water";

"a quarter of children suffer from chronic malnutrition";  
 "1.5 million new housing units are needed to deal with a critical shortage";  
 "unemployment is running at ... 50%".

Says Barham Saleh, Iraqi Planning Minister: "Every social economic indicator is considered a tragedy ..."  
 But this is no "tragedy" and it is wrong to say Iraqis are "still" living in misery. The plummet in living conditions began in 1990, at the time of the first U.S.-led invasion. Before that, as the article reports, in the 1970s and 80s:

"Iraq had one of the region's best infrastructures, health and education systems";  
 "Two decades ago, Iraq had one of the highest medical standards in the Middle East";  
 "Unemployment stood at 3.6 per cent in the 1980s";  
 "In 1980, 75% of the families had access to clean water".

Since the first invasion of Iraq in 1991, U.S.-led forces have contributed to the deaths of over a million Iraqis. This has been done in the name:

of 'getting rid of a tyrant' (Saddam Hussein, a former ally),  
 of ending Iraq's production of weapons of mass destruction (that they were not producing), and  
 of fighting terrorism (that Iraq was never involved in globally, though terrorism in Iraq is now at an all time high).

### THE WASHAW SIBI CREE PEOPLE ARE GOING HOME

50 years ago, the Canadian government forcibly uprooted the Washaw Sibi Cree people from the southern James Bay region to a "reserve" near Amos, Quebec.

During this time, the Cree have lost their language, cultural roots and sense of community.

Now, they are walking home. 350 Cree – young and old, healthy and hobbling – will trek 125 kilometers to their home lands. (*Globe and Mail*, August 9, 2005)

Canada is a democratic country. The government carries out the will of the people.

### HURRICANE KATRINA HELPS THE POOR

After Hurricane Katrina walloped Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, killing hundreds or thousands and leaving homeless tens of thousands of mainly African-Americans, Barbara Bush, mother of current U.S. president, wife of former U.S. president, toured a Houston relocation site for hurricane survivors:

"What I am hearing is that they all want to stay in Texas. So many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this is working well for them." (*Toronto Star*, September 7, 2005)

### PRIORITIES

The U.S. government says no to Cuba's offer to send doctors into areas of Louisiana ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. The U.S. government pressures its oligarchic allies, in places like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, to reject Cuban offers of medical support, even as these regimes deny medical services to their own populations.

### NUCLEAR POWERED HYPOCRISY

At the U.N. and other forums in the "international community", France, England, Canada, the U.S., Germany and Italy are indignant that Iran wants to develop its nuclear power industry.

All these G8 countries have nuclear energy programs. The U.S., France and England have nuclear weapons. The U.S. is the only country to use them in conflict.

### LIVES OF "NO"

"By the sea" sounds nice.

Martissant is a sprawling, poverty, garbage and crime-infested neighborhood by the sea in Port-au-Prince. Here, one finds lives of no jobs, no health services, no schools, no sewage, no potable water, no food and no parks.

Supporters of the twice *coup-d'etat*ed President Aristide abound



in Martissant. Aristide's were the only democratic governments in Haiti's history, the only government to begin to implement nationwide programs to put an end to centuries of 'no'.

The "international community" and Haitian elites are happy Aristide is gone. The amount of no in Martissant increases.

### THE RIGHT TO PLAY

On Jacmel Beach, boys – wearing nothing or some old shorts – play and play and play in the sun, water and waves.

Much of global human rights work comes down to this – providing healthy and happy communities for all children to grow, prosper and play in.

These boys play like any children would, and they have no healthy communities or country to grow up in.

### THE "MISFORTUNES" OF EMPIRE

Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State under President Clinton, says the U.S. war in Iraq has led to a series of "misfortunes".

In Iraq, let alone Haiti, the killed would consider their deaths as anything but a "misfortune".

### DAILY FARE

(September 8, 2005)

Omar was at home in Guatemala City when his wife Bianka Peccerelli found a sheet of paper on the front doorstep. Omar read the note and immediately called his brother-in-law, Fredy Peccerelli, director of the FAFG (Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation).

"YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE FIRST TIME, WE SAID THAT WE DID NOT WANT YOU TO KEEP WORKING, YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE EASY WAY AND NOW YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY. MR. PECHERELY, YOUR SISTER WILL PAY FOR THIS. WE KNOW THAT SHE HAS A NEW JOB, WE KNOW WHERE AND WHEN TO FIND HER AND WE ARE KEEPING AN EYE ON HER AT THE UNIVERSITY. NOW YOU'D BETTER

WATCH OUT, YOU SON OF A BITCH. YOU HAVE BEEN LUCKY TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY OUT OF THIS BUT SOMEBODY HAS TO PAY.

"YOU SHIT FACES ARE STILL DOING YOUR WORK IN THE COUNTRYSIDE ... WE TOLD YOU THE LAST TIME, OMAR GIRON, IF YOU DO THIS WE WILL BURN YOUR ASS. MR. PECHERELY, YOU HAD BETTER START COVERING YOUR ASS BECAUSE YOUR TIME HAS COME, GOD-DAMN REVOLUTIONARIES."

Since 1992, the FAFG has been carrying mass grave exhumations across Guatemala, unearthing the remains of massacre victims. Since 1992, members of the Foundation have been victims of death threats and repression, bad spelling and grammar.

### COVERING UP U.S. COMPLICITY IN REPRESSION

(Unresponded to Letter to the CBC)

Thank you for your moving report (December 13, 2005) on Pro-Busqueda's efforts to deal with the political crimes in El Salvador – in this case, the search for children who were kidnapped and disappeared by the Salvadoran military from illegally detained mothers; mothers who were usually tortured, including rape, then killed.

I note three things:

You gave no coverage of the huge amounts of funding, weaponry, training and "intelligence" that the U.S. government gave to the Salvadoran military, police and death squads over many decades, and most importantly during the worst years of State terrorism. It is part of the Pro-Busqueda story;

Even as your report correctly notes that nothing has changed with respect to the poverty and exploitation of the Salvadoran majority, you gave no coverage to the "free" trade economic relations that the U.S. and Canada have today with the Salvadoran government and oligarchic elites, in a country that is not democratic and where the rule of law serves the interests of the powerful;

The future well-being of places like El Salvador is dependent on how the issues that beset them are portrayed. As long as the CBC continues to analyze the poverty, racism and repression of places like El Salvador in an isolated, nation-state framework, divorced

from an understanding of the economic systems that allow us to benefit from their miseries, we help condemn them to repeat their cycles of poverty, racism and repression.

### YOP

Dr. Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who" is a story of many intertwined issues. To be polite, it was fear and ignorance that drove the many to try and force Horton to give up his effort to protect Whoville - the entire world of Whoville, a planet floating in space that landed on a clover, that Horton then held in his trunk. Only Horton discerned they were there, and attempted to save them.

As Horton's co-citizens beat the drums of ignorance and fear into a fervor of anger, attempting to take the clover (and the planet of Whoville, that they believed did not exist) from Horton and destroy it, Horton beseeched his (very little) friends on Whoville to make as much noise as possible, to work together and try and save their world.

Everyone on Whoville was screaming and making as much noise as they could, to try and convince Horton's ignorant, fearful and angry co-citizens that they existed ... but, as of yet, to no avail. It was not until the leader of Whoville found a tiny little Who-person not making noise, quietly playing a yo-yo, in a remote room, in an apartment, at the top of some crooked stairs. The leader urged the wee one to add their voice to the clamor of all Who's, to try and save their lives and world.

"Yop" shouted out the tiniest of tiny Who's.

That voice, added to all the other voices and clamor from Whoville, reverberated out, and symbolically broke through the ignorance and fear of Horton's co-citizens, ending their anger ... saving the planet of Whoville.

Yopl



### Conclusion: Yop

There is no beginning or end to a book like this. These stories are happening all the time, as are the millions of efforts across the planet to put a stop to and remedy the injustices and harms, and to build a just and fair global human community, from the bottom to the top, north-south-east-west.

My reactions are normal. I am angry about the injustices, inequalities and resultant sufferings that happen all the time and I am amazed everyday how extraordinary life is and what amazing people I meet and work with.

What my son spoke of at the age of 3 is what I work for, a global vision and ethic based on this basic reality: we are one people, living on this one amazing and delicate planet, and we need to struggle and work towards an ethic of interdependence, sharing and equality, of living in harmony with and respect for all life forms and with 'Mother Earth'.

I am hopeful and resolute that the human family will move slowly, in all its complications, towards "There is only one people here".

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"Not until the creation and maintenance of decent conditions of life

for all people are recognized and accepted as a common obligation

of all people and all countries -

not until then shall we, with a certain degree of justification, be able to speak of humankind as civilized."

(Albert Einstein)

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"Transformation is only valid if it is carried out with the people,  
not for them.

Liberation is like a childbirth, and a painful one.

The person who emerges is a new person: no longer either  
oppressor or oppressed,

but a person in the process of achieving freedom.

It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their  
oppressors."

(Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)

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"In a time of universal deceit,  
telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

(George Orwell)

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"The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one,  
or it may be both.

But it must be a struggle.

Power concedes nothing without demand; it never has and it  
never will."

(Frederick Douglass)

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"It is possible that you can do but very little.

It is important that you do that little."

(Mohandas Gandhi)

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"Many spiders joined together can tie up a lion."

(African proverb)

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"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed  
citizens can change the world, indeed it's the only thing that  
ever has".

(Margaret Mead)

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"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you,  
then they fight you, then you win."

(Mohandas Gandhi)

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"There are no magic answers, no miraculous methods to  
overcome the problems we face, just the familiar ones: search  
for understanding, education, organization, action ... and the  
kind of commitment that will persist despite the temptations of  
disillusionment, despite many failures and only limited successes,  
inspired by the hope of a brighter future."

(Noam Chomsky)

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## Code Z59.5: There Is Only One People Here

is a series of diary excerpts (comments, facts, quotes, etc.) from the 1990s and 2000s, related to the author's work in Central America, Mexico and North America, in defense of human rights and for a caring and just global economic development model.

### THE WEIGHT OF NOTHING

"Tell me the weight of a snowflake",  
a coal-mouse asked a wild dove.

"Nothing more than nothing", was the answer.

"In that case, I must tell you a marvellous story"  
the coal-mouse said.

"I sat on the branch of a fir tree, close to its trunk,  
when it began to snow, not heavily,  
not in a raging blizzard, no, just like in a dream,  
without any violence.

Since I didn't have anything else to do,  
I counted the snowflakes settling  
on the twigs and branch.

Their number was exactly 3,741,952.

When the next snowflake dropped onto the branch -  
nothing more than nothing, as you say -  
the branch broke off".

Having said that, the coal-mouse flew away.

The dove, since Noah's time an authority  
on matters of peace,

thought about the story for a while,

and finally said to herself

"perhaps there is only one person's voice

lacking for peace,

equality and justice to come about in the world".

[Anonymous]

"Code Z59.5 is a brilliant collection, like swimming out past the waves on the Guatemalan south coast, then riding them in, one after the other. One feels exhausted, bumped around, somehow cleansed, somehow unnerved, choking here and there on something salty, but always wanting to wade back in and merge with that vast, deep ocean, the waves still crashing in one's ears..." (John Tyynela)