

# ***DELAWARE COUNTY PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE***



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Winter 2007

## **Latin American Report**

In this issue, we focus on Mexico and Nicaragua and welcome three guest writers. Two of these, Ray Torres and Chris Schweitzer, have special expertise regarding the uprising in Oaxaca, Mexico. Ray is the chair of Witness for Peace's Mid-Atlantic regional steering committee; his report is based on his recent visit to Oaxaca. Chris, who is a member of the Christian Peacemaker Teams, has a longtime interest in Mexican human rights issues and has also just returned from Oaxaca. Sylvia Metzler, a nurse practitioner, was in Nicaragua during the recent election and writes of her experiences. She has helped to organize and has worked in medical clinics in Managua and is active in "Medicines for Nicaragua."

## **Workers Face Threats in Oaxaca, Mexico**

by Chris Schweitzer and Matthew Wiens

In response to an urgent request, Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) sent Chris Schweitzer and Matthew Wiens to provide short-term emergency support to civilians under threat around the small city of Huahuapan, Oaxaca, in early December. They accompanied leaders from Centro de Apoyo Comunitario Trabajando Unidos (Center for United Community Support, CACTUS) who received death threats and faced possible arrest or disappearance as the government tried to quell massive popular resistance in the state.

"We organize women's collectives to make clothing and table cloths ... What's wrong with that?" said Betty Gómez tearfully to a group of women in northern Oaxaca.

Gómez, the director of CACTUS, explained the recent surge in government repression of the movement for justice in this impoverished, primarily

indigenous, state. CACTUS works with alternative education projects, women's rights, farmers and indigenous groups (mostly Mixteca) in the northern mountains of Oaxaca.

Tensions began to surface in May 2006 when the Oaxaca teachers' union initiated a strike and nonviolent occupation of the central square in Oaxaca City, the state capital. They demanded better pay and working conditions, improvements to the state's educational infrastructure, and an end to human rights violations. On June 7, 120,000 people turned out to support the teachers in the largest protest in Oaxaca's history. A week later, Oaxaca's governor, Ulises Ruiz, sent in helicopters and hundreds of police who beat and tear gassed



*March in Oaxaca calling for release of prisoners.*

the demonstrators in an unsuccessful attempt to drive them out of the central square. The following morning, 300,000 citizens marched through the city to demand Ruiz's resignation. On June 17, they launched Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca (The Oaxaca Popular People's Assembly, APPO), a grassroots participatory political organization representing 365 Oaxacan civil society groups, as an alternative to the administration of Governor Ruiz.

*Continued next page.*



*Faustino Vasquez Mendez's son is in jail in Nayarit.*

Throughout the summer and fall, members of APPO continued to occupy the city's main square. According to the Oaxaca Solidarity Network, 17 people have been killed since the protests began in May. Over 400 protesters have been arrested, and Amnesty International reports widespread use of torture and beatings at detention centers.

On November 25, 2006, during another large APPO protest in the city of Oaxaca, a group of 23 people from Huahuapan, Oaxaca, decided to leave a large APPO protest in the city of Oaxaca to avoid a confrontation with the police. While this group, many involved in CACTUS, waited at the bus station, the Mexican authorities arrived and arrested them. Four children were held for three days, but, in a very unusual step, the government labeled the remaining 19 "highly dangerous" and sent them to a prison in Nayarit, 20 hours north of Huahuapan. Some APPO members have received bail as high as \$400,000, an impossible amount to raise for people earning \$1 per day. The distance and expense of traveling to Nayarit has made it extremely hard for many people from Huahuapan to visit their relatives.

The arrest on December 4 of four key APPO leaders at a press conference in Mexico City caused many APPO members, including leaders from CACTUS, to go into hiding. CPTers accompanied Gómez and another CACTUS leader as they fled Oaxaca to meet other leaders in another state. For her part,

Gómez was committed to returning to the struggle and to return to Oaxaca very soon. "After 514 years of repression [of indigenous peoples], we are finally taking back the central square. I can't leave my land and my people. I need to go back."

Two CACTUS members and Chris Schweitzer went to the impoverished neighborhood of Campimiento in Huahuapan on December 14 to document the stories of those recently imprisoned and to collect documents that may help earn the release of their loved ones. None of the prisoners had been allowed to see a lawyer in the 20 days since they were arrested. Below are some of their stories.

Bernadita Ortiz Bautista, a 40-year-old Mixteca woman, was arrested along with her son Alejandro, 19, and two of her daughters, Rosalva, 12, and Beatriz, 14. Rosalva and Beatriz were present to see their mother being beaten by police. These children were held separately for three days before being released and are now at home helping to care for five younger brothers and sisters. Their father, Pablo Ortiz, says he's unable to work as he needs to be home with the children now that their mother is away. Typical of homes in Campimiento, their one room house is about 13 by 16 feet.

Faustino Vasquez Mendez, 77, is living alone now as her son, Miguel Perez Mendez, 50, is in jail in Nayarit. She suffers from high blood pressure and says that this arrest has made her very nervous. She has little income as her son earned most of the money for food and rent. She said they had never been involved in anything like this before—the most they normally do is vote.

"In comes one, in comes another, the presidents are all the same. And here we are on the same small piece of land ... I'm praying to God [the prisoners] all get out."

Rosila Lopez Martinez, 32, is the mother of two children, Humberto and Eneri. Her husband, Justino Alejandro Gil Bautista, 50, a teacher, is in jail. She talked about why Justino was involved in the protest: "It hurt him a lot to see children hungry and cold. He could not leave the struggle. He said, 'It's not possible that this happens year after

year and the children are in the same situation.'"

Lucina Santos Reyes, 20, was away at school when her mother Juana Reyes Espinosa and her sister Paula Santos Reyes were arrested in Oaxaca. Lucina had to return home to take care of her seven-year-old sister and her two nieces.

The arrest and extended incarceration of Gildardo Herrera Flores, 52, has left his three daughters Daniela, 17, Rosio, 14, and Estefania, 8, home alone. All three are in school but Daniela is particularly worried about the lack of her father's taxi income. She said her grandmother helps a little but can't do much.

Maira Maceda Bonilla, 14, was arrested while waiting outside the bus station. She said they were handcuffed and taken to the city center where many were beaten by the police; Maira was slapped. The police also took her money, and she was in jail alone for three days.

Jaime Auilieliano Martinez Gordillo, 50, went to the protest with his wife, Maria Perez Gutierrez, 45, and their niece Marta Mendez Perez, 27. Jaime and Maria both repair shoes, and Maria takes in sewing. Their son, Jaimie, 17, traveled 20 hours alone to visit his mother and father in jail. During the visit, his mother and father were not allowed to talk to each other, and all had to keep looking at the floor. Jaimie is now taking care of his 14-year-old sister.

Most of those arrested were not scheduled to see a judge for close to five weeks. The continuing repression of protesters in Oaxaca and the reality that some people have been disappeared hangs like a cloud over all.

In conclusion, everybody we talked to in Oaxaca was very surprised by what has taken place there since June saying that both the creation and the amazing growth of APPO and the level of state repression were totally unexpected. Many in this dynamic, young coalition are reacting day to day and are still unclear where the struggle is headed. All human rights and church groups CPT met with underlined the critical importance of international support as the clash between the Mexican state and the impoverished, mostly indigenous population of Oaxaca unfolds.

# Oaxaca: Roots of Social Crisis Lie in U.S. Policies

by Ray Torres

“Don’t forget to tell our story,” pleaded Silvino Villarreal Chacon for the third time, as we shook hands. Our Witness for Peace emergency delegation boarded the bus out of Zaachila, Oaxaca, and back to Oaxaca City, the capital of Oaxaca state, rich in resources and culture but one of the economically poorest states in southern Mexico.

Witness for Peace is a politically independent, nationwide grassroots organization of people committed to nonviolence and led by faith and conscience. Our mission is to support peace, justice, and sustainable economies in the Americas by changing U.S. policies and corporate practices which contribute to poverty and oppression. At our November meeting, the national director, Melinda St. Louis, asked if anyone would join her on a delegation to Oaxaca. Having been born in Mexico City, I couldn’t say no when so many people were calling for witnesses to the state’s oppression of a basically non-violent movement.

Silvino, a high school history teacher who had worked in the United States, explained that for the past 26 years the teachers of Oaxaca have gone on strike annually for decent wages.

The roots of the situation go back to the 1980s when the educational and social budgets for Mexico were cut because of the Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) demanded by the U.S. SAP imposed economic cuts on indebted countries such as Mexico as conditions for loans. Then came the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which hit southern Mexico hardest by wiping out subsistence farming, especially corn. Mexico now imports over one third of its corn from the U.S. (Our taxes go towards more than \$10 billion a year in agricultural subsidies to U.S. producers, forcing Mexican farmers to immi-

grate north and creating social devastation by having an almost genocidal effect on corn-based religions in the region). Among the other unintended consequences of SAP and NAFTA is very little money left in Mexican government budgets for teacher salaries and other educational and social needs.

In May of 2006, teachers began camping out in the *zócalo* (town square) of Oaxaca City to press for more funding for education. On June 16, in the middle of the night, the encampment was tear-gassed by the police on orders from Oaxaca’s governor Ulises Ruiz. The 70,000 teachers along with sympathizers and other allied groups working for social change forced the police back. In four days, civil society formed the Popular Assembly for the People of Oaxaca, (APPO in Spanish) to give a unified voice to their call for reform. The protests continued throughout the summer and fall. On November 25, President Fox ordered the paramilitary Federal Preventative Police (PFP) to clear the *zócalo*, and they occupy it to this day with massive force.

The new president of Mexico, Calderon, has promised an “iron hand” to demonstrators. The APPO’s main demand is the resignation of Governor Ruiz, accused of electoral fraud and oppression. There have been over 300 people arrested in Oaxaca since the June 16 crackdown.

“Our movement is at crisis stage,” reported Silvino. “We don’t know which teacher will receive an arrest warrant next.”

There is also the threat of another mass repression as when the PFP violently drove the APPO out of Oaxaca



*Oaxaca street scene.*

City in November. Since that action, activists in Zaachila take turns at all-night vigils at the municipal hall bell tower to warn the townspeople in case of the return of government-sponsored thugs, police, or PFP. These vigils are especially necessary since, in Zaachila, the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca chased out the corrupt mayor and his police. The APPO now administers the town. The council has filed papers in court charging the mayor and the governor with a long list of acts of corruption, but no one will investigate.

At the town meeting, one of the newly elected councilmen asked us not to photograph him because he had just received an arrest warrant. A very old woman asked to speak and permission was granted: “I have received an arrest warrant, too; my actions were legal, and our cause is just!” She granted us permission to photograph her determined resistance. A couple laid a topographic map on the table and talked about a developer of expensive housing, Casa GEO, that didn’t consult the town before taking water rights, dumping sewage in the rivers, and creating new garbage dumps.

We took the bus back to Oaxaca City where the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) had driven out the APPO and still occupied the *zócalo*. The *zócalo* was open, but to get in we had to walk past riot police with tanks that had wa-

*See U.S. Policies, next page.*



## U.S. Policies

ter cannons mounted on them. When we held a meeting in our hostel, there appeared to be plainclothes policemen sitting around listening to us, so we moved our meetings to a church center in town. This is where we met with the Mexican League for the Defense of Human Rights.

Jessica Sanchez Maya, one of the league's investigators, told us Mexico wants to appear democratic. Social movements are seen by the government as disruptive and therefore criminal. This enables the government to say that there are no political prisoners in Mexico.

The league had two teachers talk to us about their experience looking for another teacher that they thought was detained by the police. When they drove through a rich neighborhood, they were stopped by plainclothes security with high-power guns. When the security detail searched the car and found APPO information, the officers became very aggressive, bound the teachers' hands tightly, and put them in the back of an SUV where the teachers were beaten in the face and back. One was hit with a bottle, and then the bottle was used to gash a cut in his ear. Only then did the security guards transfer them to the police.

When the teachers protested their treatment, the police charged them with having guns and having been beaten by other assailants. In court, the judge said that she believed the police because the teachers were looking for a teacher in the APPO movement, and, therefore, they must have had guns.

The league told us that they have investigated many incidents where people involved in innocent actions had been charged with criminal offences. We had a meeting with two business leaders who agreed that the corrupt governor should leave but when they called for a dialogue about the situation, Governor Ruiz almost had them arrested. They told us the governor makes it clear that you are for him or you are the enemy.

Governor Ruiz postponed the latest assembly election because he knew

his PRI party would lose. The APPO has been pushed underground. In Oaxaca, we could see where the APPO's calls for an end to the corrupt rule had been painted over and whitewashed off the sides of buildings. It was hard to leave this beautiful land knowing that some of the brave people who had shared their stories with us risked being jailed. It took me back to another land where another corrupt ruler, King Herod, tried to slay the innocent to protect his power.

The official delegation report will be on the Witness for Peace website at [www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org) along with opportunity to join delegations to Latin America.

Here are some of the recommendations Witness for Peace has made based on our firsthand observations of the situation in Oaxaca:

To the United States government:

- Make Oaxaca a priority issue for all U.S.-Mexico dialogue. Talks by the U.S. secretary of state and U.S. ambassador to Mexico should include insistence on working towards a peaceful solution in the conflict;
- Suspend all U.S. government programs providing training, equipment, or intelligence to police forces operating in Oaxaca except for the purpose of human rights investigations;
- Report and disclose U.S. policies and practices on training and equipping of police and the military in Mexico;
- Conduct an extensive evaluation of the impact of NAFTA on the poor in Oaxaca. Reduced government support for agricultural production has resulted in forced migration and other threats to the social fabric. The current conflict in Oaxaca has deep roots in this economic violence. Do not extend this failed model to other trade agreements.

## Teachers Strike in Oaxaca

by Marge Van Cleef

Each May for 26 years, the teachers' union of Oaxaca (Section 22 of the National Educational Workers Union, commonly called the Magisterium) has routinely called for negotiations with the state government. This year the teachers' demands focused on a rezoning process that would raise the living allowances for teachers working in remote areas. However, Gov. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz did not sit down to negotiate; instead, he was away campaigning for his party's presidential candidate. In an abrupt departure from custom, he sent a message instead: Go ahead, take over the city. So the teachers did.

Starting May 22, the 70,000 pre-school, primary, and secondary school teachers took shifts staging a sit-in in roughly 50 city blocks in the downtown area surrounding the main plaza, called the *zócalo*. They set up a radio station and blocked entrances to banks, highways, and government offices. Traffic—already nightmarish—became almost unbearable. Schools closed and classes were canceled until further notice.<sup>1</sup>

From Fidelia Vasquez, an Oaxacan woman:

I am a woman born in Oaxaca of Zapotec and Mixtec blood. Our mission as women is to create, educate, communicate, and participate. That is why we are here occupying the state radio and TV station. We are like a lot of the humble, sincere, working people of my state. From the countryside to the city, we Oaxacan women are tired of bearing this burden alone of the repression we are experiencing from a long line of people who have governed us and from our current governor, Ulises Ruiz. Although the people

*See Teachers, next page.*

# Talking Trash in Nicaragua

by Sylvia Metzler

After visiting Nicaragua for 22 years, I finally explored the trash and garbage dumps of Managua and Bluefields. During my November 2006 annual pilgrimage, I planned to be present for the presidential elections and expected to make that event the focus of my trip. But as exciting and disturbing as the elections were, my most vivid memories are of the *basura*—the trash.

Even from the safety and comfort of a delegation van that drove through the Managua *basurero* (dump), I felt like I was moving through Dante's Inferno. Mountains of trash and garbage lined the long road through the dump; fires blazed; smoke bellowed; odors arose; dogs and cows roved; and men, women, and children hurried to newly discarded piles to scavenge for food and recyclable treasure to use and sell. Houses built of scrap blended with the landscape. Children happily played in a makeshift "playground" they had fashioned out of moldy mattresses, tires, and other cast-offs.

In the van, we were speechless with horror as we left the *basurero* and went on to visit one of the polling places on this Sunday, November 5 election day. Nicaraguans had begun lining up to

vote at 6 a.m. that morning. Like many others, my friend Madlyn waited over five hours before she got her turn. There were five candidates to choose from: Daniel

Ortega running for the FSLN for the fifth time; Edmundo Jarquin from the MRS, a reformist splinter of the Sandinistas; Eduardo Montealegre from the ALN-PC and supported by the United States; Jose Rizo from the PLC; and former contra leader, Eden Pastora of his own party. The campaign was fierce and lengthy. The U.S. tried mightily to affect the outcome with money, threats, bribes, and manipulations. Our ambassador, Paul Trivelli, was so blatant in his attempts to control the process that even "his man" Montealegre publicly criticized the U.S. for its lack of respect for Nicaraguan sovereignty.

Several days before the election, we heard that President George Bush threatened to cut off the monies that



*Two brothers shift through trash at a dump in Nicaragua.*

Nicaraguans living in the U.S. were sending to family and friends back home if they elected Ortega as president. The reaction vacillated from fear to outrage. Which would prevail? As Sunday drew to a close, the results were incomplete, but Ortega was claiming victory.

On Monday, I flew to Bluefields on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua to meet with Dr. Bernardeth Kelly who works with the Moravian Church there. She focuses on the needs of children and especially those who live near or in the dangerous *basurero*. She has already established a pediatric clinic and pharmacy, a feeding center (*comedor*) for malnourished children, which feeds 100 children a day, and a small daycare center so that parents who toil in the dump do not have to take their children with them.

She wanted me to see the *basurero* first hand. While the dump is much smaller than the one in Managua, it is just as terrible and this time I walked, not drove, through it. It was hard to keep my footing through pools of dirty water and muddy slippery refuse. It was harder to see little, ragged children picking through the piles to fill the bags slung over their shoulders. It was almost unbearable to have a five- and seven-year-old come and take my hand to help me walk safely back to the road.

*See Trash, next page.*

## Teachers

who may read this are far away, we are living this crude reality of repressions and an impossible situation. We went out into the streets on the first of August to tell Ulises Ruiz that he had to leave Oaxaca. We are women who don't usually have a voice because we are brown, we are short, we are fat, and they think that we don't represent the people, but we do. We are the face of Oaxaca. It is a shame that the government doesn't recognize the greatness, the heart, and the valor

of the women who are here. We are here because we want a free Mexico, a democratic Mexico, and we have had enough. They will have to take us out of here dead, but we are going to defend the TV station and radio.<sup>2</sup>

1 Report by Deirdre Cornell, *National Catholic Reporter*, Oct. 13, 2006. Cornell and her husband are Maryknoll lay missionaries in Oaxaca, Mexico.

2 [news.nacra.org/2006/09/12/radio-cacerola](http://news.nacra.org/2006/09/12/radio-cacerola). Fidelia Vazquez is a 60-year-old teacher who lives just blocks from Radio Cacerola and is one of hundreds of women who began the takeover of the radio station when the teachers, who marched with 10,000, were denied space on the air.

## Trash

These little boys were among the poorest of the poor that Daniel Ortega promised to help lift out of poverty if elected. When he made these promises in November 1989 and lost to Violeta Chamorra, the presidential choice of the U.S., I was devastated. I was living and working in Managua at that time as a nurse practitioner at the Moravian Health Clinic and supported the advances in health and education made by Ortega and the Sandinistas. Now as I stayed glued to the election returns in Bluefields, it looked like Ortega would win.

I should have been elated but those intervening 16 years have changed Daniel and me. He has been accused of being financially opportunistic, of sexually abusing his stepdaughter as a child, of making an unholy alliance with the corrupt ex-president Arnoldo Aleman, of supporting devastating World Bank and IMF policies, and of helping to pass a draconian antiabortion bill which even forbids the procedure to save the life of the mother. I had learned to pay more attention to the grays as well as the black and whites.

But what were the alternatives? Either of the two Liberal candidates (PLC and ALN-PC) would continue the disastrous policies of the last 12 years—policies that favored a small, rich upper class while plunging the majority into ever deeper poverty. The MRS candidate was the only one who opposed the new antiabortion bill, but he was not well known. Jarquin had recently taken the place of Herty Lewites, a much respected and admired former Sandinista mayor of Managua. He would have had a good chance of being elected president, but he died last summer during minor surgery. The other candidate, Pastora, did not receive even 1 percent of the vote.

The U.S. tried unsuccessfully to unify the two Liberal candidates, one backed by the ex-president Aleman, the other by the current president, Enrique Bolanos. If they had united, the Liberal party would have beaten Ortega who

finally was declared the winner on Wednesday night, January 8. He won with only 38 percent of the vote and was inaugurated president of Nicaragua on January 9, 2007.

Many Nicaraguans still consider themselves Sandinistas but not “Danielistas” while a loyal minority have great faith that Ortega will improve living conditions and be an integral part of the new Left coalition in Latin America. Many still hate and fear the Sandinistas for the decades of the 1970s and 80s. Feminists are furious over the new antiabortion bill. The most common remark I heard after Montealegre conceded and Jimmy Carter pronounced it a clean and transparent elec-

tion was “*Vamos a ver*” (We will see).

It seems to me that one way to judge the presidency of Daniel Ortega in 2011 will be to take a walking tour of the *basureros* in Managua and Bluefields and to ascertain if he has indeed been talking trash. To judge those of us who live in the country infamous for its oppression of the Nicaraguan people, did we speak truth to power? Did we insist the U.S. respect the sovereignty of our neighbor to the south? Did we lobby and march for economic justice so that Nicaraguan children are safe in schools and homes instead of working and playing in the trash? *Vamos a ver.*

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## Scorecard: NAFTA vs. Mexican Workers

Compiled by Ronald Coburn

That the political and economic instability of places like Oaxaca seem linked, at least in part, to economic effects of free trade, motivates us to revisit some effects of NAFTA (North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement) on the Mexican economy and Mexican workers.

- *Foreign investment: In 1994 when NAFTA was being considered in Mexico, it was argued that free trade would stimulate foreign investment and, therefore, stimulate the number of jobs and the economy.*

True, at first. Initially there was an increase in foreign investment and building of factories (*maquiladoras*) on the U.S.-Mexican border, which assembled and processed goods then sold to U.S. consumers. Since this was dependent on cheap labor, the Mexican government did its part by decreasing agricultural subsidies to 25 percent of their pre-NAFTA levels, which forced farmers off their farms and accelerated the large labor migration to the north. However, in recent years when even cheaper labor became available in China and else-

where, there has been a loss in industrial jobs in Mexico. According to *The Economist*, the GNP of Mexico is now only increasing about 1 percent per year, and one can no longer argue that NAFTA produced a stimulation of Mexican productivity.

- *Free trade effects on the agriculture sector.*

Mexico prior to 1994 had high tariffs, so the coming of free trade had a huge effect on its fragile economy. The playing field was not even because production of food and other goods was highly technological and efficient in the U.S. but not so in Mexico. Also, food production enjoys a huge federal subsidy in the U.S., which was further increased during the 1990s to help U.S. exporters. The competition from the massive influx of cheap food into Mexico decimated the agricultural sector, already hurting from depopulation and decreased government supports. Corn is a good example: the influx of corn from the U.S. made it impossible

*See Scorecard, next page.*



# Stand with the “Philadelphia Declare Peace 14”!

by Karen Wisniewski

On September 25, 2006, at the Philadelphia office of then-Senator Rick Santorum, 14 people, including three Delco Pledge members—Ron Coburn, Marge Van Cleef, and Karen Wisniewski—were arrested for non-violently demanding that our senators and congresspeople act to end the war. The 14 will stand trial on April 23, 2007, on misdemeanor charges of defiant trespass, criminal trespass, and criminal conspiracy.

Please contact [brandywine@juno.com](mailto:brandywine@juno.com) or visit [www.brandywinepeace.com](http://www.brandywinepeace.com) for information on how to support the 14 as the trial draws nearer.



Ron Coburn, Marge Van Cleef, and Karen Wisniewski. Photo by Ray Torres.

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## Scorecard

for the small Mexican corn farmer to compete. As a result, instead of exporting corn as happened prior to NAFTA, a third of the corn used in Mexico was imported from the U.S. Now, due to recent use of U.S.-produced corn to manufacture ethanol, the cost of corn and tortillas in Mexico has doubled, producing real hardship for the majority of the population, which is living in borderline poverty.

- *Illegal movements of workers from Mexico into the U.S.*

One of President Clinton's arguments when he was lobbying for passage of NAFTA was that stimulation of jobs would decrease illegal immigration. He told the U.S. Congress, "If you defeat NAFTA you have to share responsibility for increased immigration into the U.S. where Mexicans want jobs that are presently held by Americans." Turns out not to be the case: illegal immigration actually increased, particularly recently, even with more border control by our National Guard troops recruited for this task by President Bush and by vigilantes. This, of course, reflects the loss of jobs in the Mexican

agricultural sector and more recently in the industrial sector.

- *NAFTA will help the Mexican worker. (This reflects the neoliberal gospel that what helps the rich and industry, helps the poor).*

This is obviously not the case for small farmers in this largely agricultural country. But even for Mexicans who were recruited into industry, there is evidence that their actual pay has decreased with time. In addition, there are reports of human rights violations, union organization busting, sweatshop conditions, and environmental insults in the *maquiladoras* that have hurt the well-being of industrial workers. NAFTA included a requirement that human rights violations would be assessed by an independent organization that had power to enforce human rights. It was stated that the U.S. Congress would not have passed NAFTA unless this requirement was a part of the agreement. However, this did not occur because the Mexican government took over control of this process, and the U.S. government apparently was not interested.<sup>1</sup> The agreement also included environ-

mental requirements that were largely ignored. It should be noted that the plight of both the Mexican farm and industrial workers at the present time is not entirely due to the switch to free trade and that the Mexican economy is, of course, influenced by multiple factors. For example, the implementation of structural readjustment tied to World Bank loans to Mexico required reduction in government spending for workers health, salary and pension benefits, and other social needs.

- *Political instability.*

President Salinas's support for NAFTA in 1994 did not foresee effects on Mexico's stability, which we are seeing now, particularly in rural southern Mexico: the uprisings in Oaxaca and Chiapas where economic depression and population migrations drove recent events.

So who in Mexico benefited from NAFTA? Adding up the score, it certainly was not Mexican labor!

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<sup>1</sup> See Amnesty International website, [www.amnestyinternational.com](http://www.amnestyinternational.com), for a listing of recent human rights violations occurring in Mexico.

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## Community Calendar

Mar. 11, 4:30 pm—Brandywine Peace Community Potluck Supper & Program, University Lutheran Church, 3637 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa. (\*bring main dish, salad, or dessert to share). "The Media vs the Public in the Iraq Invasion-Occupation," Prof. Edward S. Herman, Prof. Emeritus of Finance, Wharton School, U. of P.

Mar. 18, 6:30 pm—Declaration of Peace to U.S. War & Occupation of Iraq, Candlelight Vigil, TBA, Center City, Phila.

Mar. 19—Nonviolent Resistance to the War at Lockheed Martin, Valley Forge, Pa. (behind the King of Prussia Mall).

Apr. 6, noon—Good Friday Stations of Justice & Peace & Trail of Mourning & Truth, Lockheed Martin.

For more information, check [www.brandywinepeace.com](http://www.brandywinepeace.com). To receive e-mail notices, send e-mail address to [brandywine@juno.com](mailto:brandywine@juno.com). Brandywine Peace Community P.O. Box 81, Swarthmore, PA 19081. 610-544-1818. [brandywine@juno.com](mailto:brandywine@juno.com).

### "Positive Energy" at 5th Annual Delco Peace Festival

The Peace Center of Delaware County will celebrate the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Delaware County Peace Festival, Saturday, May 12, 2007, at the Peace Center, Springfield Friends Meeting House, 1001 Old Sproul Rd., Springfield. Freebo, who has played with Bonnie Raitt's band, John Mayall, Muddy Waters, Crosby, Stills and Nash, and Ringo Starr, will be featured. Community organizations will set up tables, booths, and exhibits. The Peace Center will present awards to individuals and/or organizations working for human rights. Admission is free and open to the public. Contact Robin Lasersohn: 610-328-2424 or [robinlas@comcast.net](mailto:robinlas@comcast.net).

## Award-winning Button Now Available!

For the first time ever, the Pledge of Resistance is pleased to offer our brand new 2007 Official Delco Pledge Political Button. This limited edition item is a special offer available only from the Pledge.

### INSTANT CLASSIC

RESISTANCE - Every Little Bit Helps. That's the message of our 11/2-inch pin-back. Buttons have often captured the imagination of a generation: "What if the Pentagon had to hold a bake sale?" or "Nixon Now." With this new official Pledge button, you'll soon be sporting a slogan sure to become a classic!

### A STYLISH STATEMENT

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