

our developing world's voices

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Our World Is Connected Latin America: Hope for Cooperation

Ecuador Elects Progressive President

Excerpted from Pachamama e-message (a nonprofit working with the indigenous Achuar)

The November 26th election in Ecuador confirmed Rafael Correa as President, a progressive thinker whose ideals and vision seem to be aligned with Pachamama.

Correa's agenda includes looking at new structures that will directly deal with poverty and inequality, education, health and housing needs. As an advocate of environmental rights, Correa also wants to ensure that Ecuador's environmental resources are protected. He supports a plan to create a protective zone in the Amazon rainforest and build the economy without relying on oil exploitation. Consequently, there lies a greater context for protecting the rights of indigenous people and sharing the environmental resources of the country. Early in his career he did volunteer work in remote Andean indigenous villages where he learned and still speaks the Quechua language.

Correa, who served as the country's minister of finance, opposes free market economic policies that have proven to be debilitating and ineffective for Ecuadorian campesinos and indigenous people. He has criticized Ecuador's congress, referring to it as a 'sewer' of corruption, and is committed to re-examining the economic structure to ensure that its resources are invested in the people.

It is believed that Correa's election will create a supportive environment in which to continue Pachamama's work.

Correa already declared he will not renew the contract for the US naval base. (He'd reconsider if the US allowed an Ecuadoran base in Miami.)

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COME HOME ENERGIZED!

As a tribute to our developing world Board Secretary Stan Seaberg, who died a few weeks ago, other Board members urged that we raise a scholarship for a teacher to go on the odw South Africa tour. Stan was an outstanding teacher and wonderful traveler, mentoring teachers who travelled with us. All donations are tax-deductible. Checks to odw memoed to Stan's Memorial scholarship fund. We know Advisory Committee member Gertrude Welch who died in April would appreciate this fund. She, too was a mentor and supporter of odw always and all peace and justice issues.

Our hearts go out to the families of Gertrude Welch and Stan Seaberg. They were wonderful supporters of *odw* personal friends:dedicated, warm. and helpful. Always there for us.
They will be sorely missed, but often remembered.

Ecuador Choses the Path of Change and Sovereignty Eduardo Tamayo G. [Ecuador escogió la ruta del cambio y la soberanía americas.irc-online.org](http://Ecuador.escojió.la.ruta.del.cambio.y.la.soberanía.americas.irc-online.org) Excerpted and updated 2 from translation by: Katherine Kohlstedt, IRC Americas Program, International Relations Center (IRC)

Many Ecuadorians experienced a feeling of satisfaction as they celebrated the triumph of the middle-class economist Rafael Correa over the multimillionaire banana magnate Alvaro Noboa, who failed in his third attempt to become president.

In Quito and Guayaquil, people flocked to the streets to celebrate. Correa emphasized this was an election between two very different political proposals.

The mass media aligned themselves strictly with Noboa, giving ample space for the multimillionaire's broadcasts, and arranging scripted interviews with him on their news shows, journalists avoided "uncomfortable" questions regarding the tax returns of his 114 businesses (many of them are being sued by the state for evasion), the use of child labor in his banana production, or the violation of the worker's rights of his employees. (Familiar?)

He gave out money, wheelchairs, food, medicine, and loans; and offered to build 300,000 homes annually.

Alternative forms of communication, such as electronic networks, graffiti combining humor and irony, songs, videos, flyers, people's radio, etc., permitted people to be informed and learn what the mass media hid or distorted.



Thousands of voters in the polling places, kept vigil to see that the result was respected in response to accusations of manipulations of results.

Continued page 3

Venezuela: Challenge for Change and Hope

The US is sending a new ambassador to Venezuela to build better relations!!! Let's hope it's true! The former one supported the coup in every way, including the media. RCTV channel owner was a major supporter and refused to run anything but cartoons when Chavez was brought back after the coup failed.

This and playing non-children's programs during children's time slot resulted in the license not being renewed (five years after the coup.)

University students doing their service learning at a community center complained that they had lost their source of culture! (Read: soaps!) and their freedom of expression. A worker there followed us back to our van to say that these youth have money, that's how they can go to that university, so they probably agree with the RCTV conservative point of view. It's still on cable.

We saw several student marches, they asked for and got a audience with the Supreme Court, the Legislature. More freedom of expression than we have!

Where's the Oil Money Going?

We saw urban factory and rural farm coops supported by oil money. Also schools, clinics. Agricultural reform comes when oil money subsidizes landowners who have excess land that can be used for coops in exchange for better roads for transporting produce to market. Coops get credit, training, seeds and a tractor. It's also used for housing to replace the hillside shacks as well as substandard rural housing. And it's three bedrooms (one for the married couple, one for the male children and one for the female children) plus two bathrooms.



Venezuela Integrates Domestic and Latin American Policies

Venezuela Oil Institute money is going to support all kinds of coops.

Money is also going to help Bolivia and Ecuador pay their international debt and begin real development (BancoSur) and to stimulate trade among Latin American countries for the benefit of all of them: ALBA. Some of it is on a barter basis. Cuba shares medical personnel while Venezuela shares oil. Bolivian natural gas now earns \$2 billion a year for the country instead of \$600 million last year. Cuba and Venezuela are helping others with literacy campaigns.

Bolivia and Ecuador had new presidents elected before they had compatible legislatures. This was resolved in Ecuador but not yet in Bolivia.

Of course not everyone is happy. A new law in Bolivia makes mandatory the retention of any employee working for a firm for 6 months. Hard for start-ups.

And some problems are being helped mainly through private means: Street kids. Some model programs. Some we might replicate.

Bolivia and Ecuador have large indigenous populations that have cultural, health and language differences that they are working to accommodate. Hopefully they can work together to share solutions. Coca has cultural, medicinal and economic ramifications, so in Bolivia, a certain amount of land is allowed to be devoted to the cultivation and the coca growers union is in charge of sales. Processed coca (cocaine is illegal).



Venezuela and Ecuador Afro nationals celebrate some of the same fiestas: Feast of San Juan

Continued page 4

Ecuador election continued from page 2
Noboa's dirty campaign didn't pay off against Correa, whom he not only called a Communist, but also the Devil, and an instrument of Hugo Chávez and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Rafael Correa knew how to synthesize the people's demands to overcome his disadvantage in the first round of the elections, where he came in second place with only 22.84% of the votes. Correa capably used the media and especially the radio, he carried out a door-to-door campaign, and made personal appearances at many forums and marches. Meanwhile his opponent, believing himself the victor, refused to debate, attended few interviews and preferring paid ads. In the second phase of the campaign, Correa shifted focus concentrating on the social aspects related to fighting poverty, and increasing access to housing, employment, and loans. He also made promises to satisfy the demands of the states. (We have some of the same concerns don't we?)



Voting in Ecuador is mandatory. A blank or Xed ballot is allowed. No ballot turned in merits a fine.



Latin American Integration *continued from p 3*

Correa's platform has five programmatic areas: an ethical revolution; a sustainable and democratic socio-economic revolution; a political revolution; a dignified and sovereign country; Latin American integration. His popular referendum for the installation of a Constitutional Assembly to draft a new Constitution succeeded. The Alianza País movement that supports Correa now has congressional representatives.

The Correa government is in tune with the progressive governments in Latin America of Chávez, Evo Morales, Lula, and Tabaré Vázquez. He will maintain relations with the United States in a framework of mutual respect. However, he will not sign a Free Trade Agreement with the United States because it is detrimental, especially to small producers.

He won't declare the FARC to be a terrorist group. Only Colombia and the United States has. Neither the United Nations nor any Latin American government has. He will engage in dialogue with Colombia and Brazil to seek measures that compensate Ecuador's commercial imbalance with these two countries.

Correa has said he will revise transnational oil companies' contracts (of five barrels of oil extracted from Ecuadorian soil, four go to transnationals and one to the State similar to Bolivia previously), he will study re-entrance of Ecuador to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), he will limit the payment of external debt in order to make social investments in education and health, he will pay what Ecuador owes to the IMF to "liberate" it from its impositions. *Dollarization* will continue. Social organization and mobilization is vital to be able to keep his campaign promises.

For the stark reality:

cleanup@amazonwatch.org www.texacotoxico.org

- 30 times more oil spilled in the Amazon basin than by Exxon Valdez
- Over \$6 billion in clean-up costs is needed
- Five indigenous groups face extinction
- Child leukemia in the area is skyrocketing
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- Over 600 unlined toxic waste pits remain
- Chevron is covering up the issue
- Criminal investigation of Chevron in Ecuador and the USA is on-going

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By all means, we should support the troops.

John Hourihan [Con Post 9/24/ '07](#)

Years ago, I was sitting in a morning meeting of journalists who were "brainstorming" what we should put into a special section called "The Vietnam War – 10 Years After."

They wanted to talk about the "ethics of war" and the "politics of the troops," and I wanted to talk about agent orange and the lack of support for returnees.

They wanted to talk about no parades. I wanted to talk about no health care. I made a few suggestions but their glasses were so filled I couldn't pour another ounce into them. It just spilled out onto the boardroom table.

Finally, I shouted, "OK, how many of you have killed someone? Raise your hands. I mean, you know, actually killed someone."

I raised my hand and looked around.

No one but me? Then quiet down and listen. I have something to say."

And for the first time since then, I now want to ask again, "How many of you who say you support the troops have killed someone? OK, then I have something to say.

If you want to know what it means to "support the troops" you first have to understand that war wouldn't be all that bad if people didn't get killed, and that people die in a war for one reason: Because they couldn't help it. It is death that is the problem. It is the killing that makes it difficult, that twists people's minds and sends them home "different." And the recent multiple-tour idiocy that has become the pattern for Iraq is wrong and dangerous. It has to be stopped. Our troops are seeing too much death, and they won't come home healthy. Those who come back, return with their minds figuratively strapped to a white table in a brightly lit operating room in a mythical hospital, and there they wait for the experts to come in and jolt them back into sanity, but they aren't finding experts in the booth. I spent three tours in a war. That was about three years for me, WWII was different. They spent a longer time,. But in Iraq, we keep sending the same people back time and time again.

Let me tell you why it is so important to stop this practice. The first six months go by relatively fast. A

blur of the standard operating procedure of war, getting used to climate changes, biological changes, and creating a cognitive map of the dangers of environment. At first you are taken care of by those who have been there a while. But still people die. If you live, you become one of those who does the "caring for." When danger snaps in front of you, it is your own voice you hear first. It is your eyes that find the evils, your hands that point to safety, and still people die.

War strips the invulnerability of youth from your nerves like a knife, scraping along a leather strip, and you realize any minute can be your last, or worse, the last for those you care about. By the end of your tour, you have turned numb to everything but staying alive. You are depressed that your friends have died, that you couldn't save them. You stop sleeping and sometimes you lose weight. You sweat cold in torrid heat and you shake cold when you are not. You count first the months, then the weeks, then it comes down to counting days, and hours before you get your orders home.

But you feel every second.

Supporting the troops has nothing to do with keeping them in a combat zone even an instant longer than they have to be there.

When you return, you are no longer young. Everyone notices that you've changed. My sister Nancy, who never minces words, said simply,

"You were insane. It took years to get you back."

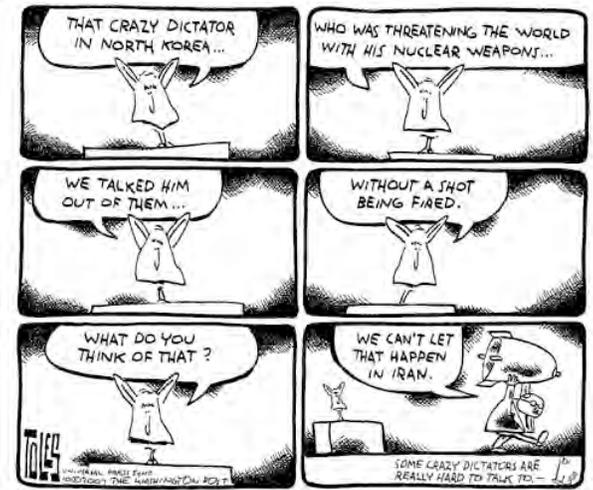
One of the problems is that there is no happiness like the feeling of stepping onto American soil after having spent a year or more in combat, and there is no stronger feeling than the guilt you feel for being happy when others are dead. This is multiplied when you realize they forgot to tell you that you might feel guilty about killing other people.

When you return for your second tour, you bring this feeling with you. And it grows. And if you have three tours you have three times as many people to feel guilty about. Whether you are feeling it for those you killed or for those you couldn't keep from being killed, or just because you survived and others didn't. And it is multiplied by itself every day you are involved. It is amazing to me that so many soldiers return whole. So here's what I have to say.

By all means, support the troops.

Bring them home.

jhourihan@ctpost.com



We Have Seen the Enemy - And Surrendered By Barbara Ehrenreich 9/20/07

Bow your heads and raise the white flags. After facing down the Third Reich, the Japanese Empire, the U.S.S.R., Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein, the U. S. has met an enemy it dares not confront - the American private health insurance industry. With the courageous exception of Dennis Kucinich, the Democratic candidates have all rolled out health "reform" plans that represent total, Chamberlain-like, appeasement. Edwards and Obama propose universal health insurance plans that would in no way ease the death grip of Aetna, Unicare, MetLife, and the rest of the evil-doers. Clinton - why are we not surprised? - has gone even further, borrowing the Republican idea of actually feeding the private insurers by making it mandatory to buy their product. Will I be arrested if I resist paying \$10,000 a year for a private policy laden with killer co-pays and deductibles? It's not only the Democratic candidates who are capitulating. The surrender-buzz is everywhere. I heard it from a notable liberal political scientist on a panel in August: We can't just leap to a single payer system, he said in so many words, because it would be too disruptive, given the size of the private health insurance industry. Then I heard it yesterday from a Chicago woman who leads a nonprofit agency serving the poor: How can we go to a Canadian style system when the private industry



has gotten so "big"?

Yes, it is big. Leighton Ku, at the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, said there would be \$776 billion in expenditures on private health insurance this year. It's also a big-time employer, paying what economist Paul Krugman has estimated: two to three million people just turn down claims.

This in turn generates ever more employment in doctors' offices to battle the insurance companies. Dr. Atul Gawande, a practicing physician, wrote in *The New Yorker* that "a well-run office can get the insurer's rejection rate down from 30 percent to, say, 15 percent. That's how a doctor makes money. It's a war with insurance, every step of the way." And that's another thing your insurance premium has to pay for: the on-going "war" between doctors and insurers.



Note: The private health insurance industry is not big because it relentlessly seeks out new customers. Unlike any other industry, this one grows by rejecting customers. No matter how shabby you look, Cartier, Lexus, or Nordstrom's will happily take your money. Not Aetna. If you have a prior conviction - excuse me, a pre-existing condition - it doesn't want your business. Private health insurance is only for people who aren't likely to ever get sick. In fact, why call it "insurance," which normally embodies the notion of risk-sharing? This is extortion.

Think of the damage. An estimated 18,000 Americans die every year because they can't afford or can't qualify for health insurance. That's the 9/11 carnage multiplied by three - every year. Not to mention all the people who are stuck in jobs they hate because they don't dare lose their current insurance.

Saddam Hussein never killed 18,000 Americans or anything close; nor did the U.S.S.R. Yet we faced down those "enemies" with huge patriotic bluster, vast military expenditures, and, in the case of Saddam, armed intervention. So why does the U.S. soil its pants and cower in fear when confronted with the insurance industry?

Here's a plan: First, locate the major companies. No major intelligence effort will be required, since Google should suffice. Second, estimate their armed strength. No doubt there are legions of security guards involved in protecting the company headquarters from irate consumers, but these should be manageable with a few brigades. Next, consider an air strike, followed by an infantry assault.

And what about the two to three million insurance industry employees whose sole job it is to turn down claims? Well, I have a plan for them: It's called unemployment. What country in its right mind would pay millions of people to deny other people health care?

I'm not mean, though. If we had the kind of universal, single-payer, health insurance Kucinich is advocating, private health insurance workers would continue to be covered even after they are laid off. As for the health insurance company executives, there should be an adequate job training program for them perhaps as home health aides.

Fellow citizens, where is the old macho spirit that has sustained us through countless conflicts against enemies both real and imagined? In the case of health care, we have identified the enemy, and the time has come to crush it.

Barbara Ehrenreich.com is the author of thirteen books, including the New York Times bestseller "Nickel and Dimed." A frequent contributor to The New York Times, Harpers, and The Progressive, she is a contributing writer to Time magazine.

Billionaires Up America Down by Holly Sklar

October 22, 2007 CommonDreams.org

When it comes to producing billionaires, America is doing great.

Until 2005, multimillionaires could still make the Forbes list of the 400 richest Americans. In 2006, the Forbes 400 went billionaires only.

This year, you'd need a Forbes 482 to fit all the billionaires.

A billion dollars is a lot of dough. Queen Elizabeth II, British monarch for five decades, would have to add \$400 million to her \$600 million fortune to reach \$1 billion. And she'd need another \$300 million to reach the Forbes 400 minimum of \$1.3 billion. The average Forbes 400 member has \$3.8 billion.

When the Forbes 400 began in 1982, it was dominated by oil and manufacturing fortunes. Today, says Forbes, "Wall Street is king."

Nearly half the 45 new members, says Forbes, "made their fortunes in hedge funds and private equity. Money manager John Paulson joins the list after pocketing more than \$1 billion short-selling sub-prime credit this summer."

The 25th anniversary of the Forbes 400 isn't party time for America. We have a record 482 billionaires - and record foreclosures. We have a record 482 billionaires - and a record 47 million people without any health insurance.

Since 2000, we have added 184 billionaires - and 5 million more people living below the poverty line. The official poverty threshold for one person was a ridiculously low \$10,294 in 2006. That won't get you two pounds of caviar (\$9,800) and 25 cigars (\$730) on the Forbes Cost of Living Extremely Well Index. The \$20,614 family-of-four poverty threshold is lower than the cost of three months of home flower arrangements (\$24,525).

Wealth is being redistributed from poorer to richer.

Between 1983 and 2004, the average wealth of the top 1 percent of households grew by 78 percent, reports Edward Wolff, professor of economics at New York University. The bottom 40 % lost 59 %.

In 2004, one out of six households had zero or negative net worth. Nearly one out of three households had less than \$10,000 in net worth, including home equity. That's before the mortgage crisis hit.

In 1982, when the Forbes 400 had just 13 billionaires, the highest paid CEO made \$108 million and

the average full-time worker made \$34,199, adjusted for inflation in \$2006. Last year, the highest paid hedge fund manager hauled in \$1.7 billion, the highest paid CEO made \$647 million, and the average worker made \$34,861, with vanishing health and pension coverage.

The Forbes 400 is even more of a rich men's club than when it began. The number of women has dropped from 75 in 1982 to 39 today.

The 400 richest Americans have a conservatively estimated \$1.54 trillion in combined wealth. That amount is more than 11 percent of our \$13.8 trillion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - the total annual value of goods and services produced by our nation of 303 million people. In 1982, Forbes 400 wealth measured less than 3 percent of U.S. GDP.

And the rich, notes Fortune magazine, "give away a smaller share of their income than the rest of us."

Thanks to mega-tax cuts, the rich can afford more mega-yachts, accessorized with helicopters and mini-submarines. Meanwhile, the infrastructure of bridges, levees, mass transit, parks and other public assets inherited from earlier generations of taxpayers crumbles from neglect, and the holes in the safety net are growing.

The top 1 percent of households - average income \$1.5 million - will save a collective \$79.5 billion on their 2008 taxes, reports Citizens for Tax Justice. That's more than the combined budgets of the Transportation Department, Small Business Administration, Environmental Protection Agency and Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Tax cuts will save the top 1 percent a projected \$715 billion between 2001 and 2010. And cost us \$715 billion in mounting national debt plus interest.

The children and grandchildren of today's underpaid workers will pay for the partying of today's plutocrats and their retinue of lobbyists.

It's time for Congress to roll back tax cuts for the wealthy and close the loophole letting billionaire hedge fund speculators pay taxes at a lower rate than their secretaries.

Inequality has roared back to 1920s levels. It was bad for our nation then. It's bad for our nation now.

hsklar@aol.com Co-author of "[Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work for All of Us](#)" and "[A Just Minimum Wage Good for Workers, Business and Our Future.](#)"

THANKS to all who helped make Vic's 80th a grand affair. And thanks to the many contributions still coming in to honor his years!

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