



our developing world's voices

spring 2013

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Click here for full edition:<http://blank.hypersurf.com/~odw/pages/newletters.html>

[Update on Burma, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and more!](#)

Burma (Update on Burma May 17 6:30 potluck, 7:15 program, door prizes, fair trade coffee, cocoa, chocolate, Palestinian olive oil sales. San Jose Peace and Justice Center 48 S 7th St between San Fernando and Santa Clara

Most in the news:

Rohingya Refugees: Are they Burmese? from Coalition for Refugees from Burma

The Rohingya people are Burmese of Muslim descent, native to the northern Arakan region of Burma, bordering Bangladesh. Rohingya have been present in Burma for centuries. Many Rohingya speak Bengali, as a result of living so close to the border to Bangladesh. The Rakhine people, of Hindu and Mongol background, also reside in Arakon, and are the ethnic majority. The Rakhine people speak a language very similar to Burmese.

The Rohingyas...fighting for recognition as a distinct ethnic group since World War II, historically not considered an original ethnic group from Burma. Shortly after the military coup in 1962, the government enacted policies to further isolate the Rohingyas, causing many to leave Burma for other opportunities. Burma initiated the Emergency Immigration Act in the mid-1970s: all citizens were required to possess a National Registration Certificate, issued by the military government. Rohingyas were unable to attain the Certificate, and instead were given Foreign Registration Cards. This downgraded status prevented them from getting jobs, attending school, and accessing other basic services. Rohingya were not afforded the fundamental freedoms outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Later that decade, both the army and the Rakhines began to attack the Rohingyas, resulting in over 200,000 Rohingyas fleeing over the border to Bangladesh. Due to the Bangladeshi government's policies around repatriation, nearly all the refugees were forced to returned back to Burma.

According to Burmese law, a person must establish Burmese ancestry back to 1823 in order to be considered a citizen, something most ethnic minorities are

unable to prove. (Another reason they need a new constitution. Ed. note) The Rohingya and all other minorities are denied many basic human rights as a result of this, as they are unable to prove citizenship due to their historical experiences of persecution. In the early 90's, the Rohingyas again experienced widespread repression and abuse from government forces. As before, many were forced to flee their villages, leaving everything behind. By March 1992, 260,000 Burmese Muslims were living in refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar. According to these Rohingya refugees, many ethnic minorities living in the Rakhine State were the target of aggression, degradation, and torture at the hands of the majority ethnic group. Refugees reported on extrajudicial executions, rape, religious persecution and torture by the military. In addition, the Rohingyas were also forced to work, unpaid, for security forces, building bridges, roads and barracks, digging fish and prawn ponds, and laboring as porters.

Out of the nearly one million people internally displaced in Burma, the Rohingya refugee situation is considered the worst, according to the United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) www.allburmarefugees.com



Women of Muslim and other faiths learn sewing at free 2 month courses offered by Muslim Foundation Trust

The volunteer staff of all faiths at Muslim Free Hospital treats patients of all faiths

This report doesn't mention the alleged rape of a Burmese Buddhist that set a violent rampage against Muslims that security forces didn't stop, but encouraged. An extreme Buddhist monk began a campaign: burn mosques, don't serve or buy from Muslims, that has the country in flames. One analysis

is if people are afraid they're more likely to vote for a strong military leader. and that Aung San Suu Kyi (The Lady) hasn't spoken up against anti- Muslims violence for fear of losing Buddhist votes. Neither has she spoken against violence against Kachin fighting the army against displacement by future dams for hydroelectric power, or the Karen on the Thai border.

Police wouldn't allow us to speak with villagers protesting a Chinese coal mining company that had topped 30 of 32 mountains where they lived. The military used white phosphorous against them. The Lady went to convince them this investment was necessary for the economy and they would benefit. She didn't go to listen to them! Sad! Tragic!

Ecuador (with much help from Michelle Cordova)

After almost two decades, Chevron Texaco lost its appeal in October 2010 to the US



Supreme Court so the injunction blocking the payment of \$18.2 billion over pollution in the Amazon was overturned. Not a river, a stream a rivulet, a puddle wasn't polluted. And gas flames were also polluting the air resulting in acid rain. There was no pure water for people to drink. Every family had members with cancer and animals who had aborted. This began in 1972 because Texaco didn't follow safety procedures they used in the US. Since Chevron has no production in Ecuador that can be confiscated to get the money Ecuador is trying to get it through

other countries.

In President Correa's past two terms the people have gained free education, health care, a new constitution which gives rights to the many indigenous and to nature. But as the first woman indigenous Supreme Court Justice told us: Nature has rights now, but if people don't stand up for her rights they're not worth anything.

Yasuni National Park, considered the most biologically diverse spot on Earth, home to the indigenous nationalities/communities, the Tagaeri and Taromenane will protect them will remain pristine. A cap and trade deal: countries were paying Ecuador for half of what the country would earn if that oil came out of the ground. That worked until the financial crash. President Correa, an economist, then told the World Bank and the IMF Ecuador wouldn't pay their international debt. After one year those bonds were almost worthless. He appointed a Commission to investigate. They then went on to buy those bonds at a very low price and Ecuador was free from the debt and had no interest to pay!

But the perceived need to gain income for the country has led to the putting up for auction about 12 million Amazon hectares of pristine rainforest to be logged and exploited for its oil. And other mining to go on. There is much opposition to this by youth and indigenous. We can check out Amazon Watch, Chevron Toxico, or Avaaz to learn what we can do to help them!

El Salvador



US foreign policy continues to try to erode improvements in peoples' lives. The government has made education free and improved health care but our Ambassador is pushing the Assembly to pass a Privatization Act which would privatize both plus utilities, water and more.

Earlier Pres. Funes succumbed to the threat to withdraw US aid if he didn't replace the civilians on the National Security Commission with generals trained at School of the Americas who had been part of the massacres during the civil war.

Our Ambassador is speaking against the Presidential candidate of the FLMN who is now the Minister of Education. How would we feel if China meddled in our domestic affairs? After the war our tax dollars subsidized and aided militarily, the US just can't seem to accept the concept of El Salvadoran sovereignty.

The struggle against mining continues. Extractive industries are overriding people's protests around the world, polluting air and water, pushing people off land where they've lived for generations. And WTO and NAFTA/CAFTA courts think those companies deserve to get the profits they would have gained had they been licensed to extract!

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

Fair Trade Not Free Trade

What does that mean? NAFTA on steroids involving all of the countries on either side of the Pacific! The only thing that's free about free trade agreements is that corporations are free to bring in or take out whatever products they wish with no regulations to protect workers or the environment: examples include stealing water including from people's wells as in Bolivia and California and other states. There have been some victories P 4

against the water companies, but not always. Honduran indigenous are fighting against a private hydroelectric dam project that would take their water supply from their titled land without consultation. Timed with the start of the next Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiating round in Peru this May, communities throughout the Pacific Rim will be holding public assemblies to discuss the potential local impacts of the TPP and steps people can take together to prevent being saddled with a disastrous corporate trade deal.

<http://www.citizenstrade.org/ctc/blog/2013/04/14/tpp-days-of-action-coming-to-your-community/>

Whether one wants to reverse the global race to the bottom in wages and working conditions; expand access to life-saving generic medications; support indigenous rights; protect communities' ability to combat global warming; or sustain family farms and defend food sovereignty, there is no shortage of reasons to act together on the TPP.

Guatemala excerpted from SOA Watch

Today represents a new dawn for the Ixil, Guatemalans and other survivors of systematic violence, we celebrate with hope in our hearts and a renewed sense of purpose. Efraim Rios Montt was given an 80 year prison sentence for genocide and crimes against humanity committed under his dictatorship (1982-1983).



SOA Watch continues to call for the closure of the School of the Americas (renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation where Rios Montt and many others were trained) and for an investigation into the connections between U.S. military training and human rights abuses in Latin America. We will continue fighting in the streets, as well as our judicial and legislative branches until we also see justice for the victims of the SOA. Please contact your Member of Congress to urge them to close down the SOA: [Click here.](#)

We (SOA WATCH) also point to our recent victory in the courtrooms of the United States, in which a federal judge from California has ordered that the State Department grant an SOA Watch request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) demanding the release of the names of graduates and instructors from the SOA/WHINSEC, which we have previously been denied.



We rejoice with the hundreds of thousands of Mayans who have lived under threat of death, lost loved ones, had land taken away, feared to wear their indigenous clothes and much more. We applaud the courage of the Judge and the hundred or more witnesses who testified. May this help change the foreign policy of

the US so we stop funding the police and military of oppressive rulers any where in the world.



our developing world began after we saw what poor Mayans farming on steep hill-sides could do to help their families and communities. We committed ourselves to help North Americans and others to know positive acts done by poor people in “developing countries” Giving voice to the voiceless so we could learn from them. Solidarity isn’t a solo activity!

*Rigoberta Menchu,
symbol of resistance*

Immigration/Deportation A collaborative letter by AFL-CIO, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, United We Dream and the [National Day Laborer Organizing Network](#)

Dear President Obama,
We write to you with
stop the deportations
migrants who are
prospective relief
gration reform.



an urgent request to
of undocumented im-
likely candidates for
through federal immi-

We applaud your
immigration reform.
turbid by the emphasis

commitment to passing
However, we are dis-
your administration

places on deportation. With an estimated 1,100 undocumented immigrants de-
ported each day, countless families have been needlessly separated, a large number
of whom would be eligible for legal status and eventual citizenship under the im-
migration reform laws currently being debated by Congress.

In creating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, you took a com-
mon sense step toward protecting our future citizens in waiting by granting them
relief from deportation and the opportunity to work to contribute to our country. It
is time to do the same for their mothers and fathers. We call on you to take the first
step toward immigration reform by putting an end to this needless suffering un-
leashed every day on countless families and communities.

We join The Nation magazine to urge you to copy and paste this letter and send it
to President Obama <http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/>

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What was *odw* doing in 2012?

- * winter, spring and fall voices plus numerous action alerts!
- * 16 presentations on Burma, several on the northwest tour from Vancouver BC to Arcata and south to Mariposa, Monterey and LA. 480 attended.
- * 6 co-sponsored programs with 250 attending.
- * facilitated our simulation Starvation or Survival about subsistence farmers (50% of the world's population) with 210 students in 7 classes.
- * 5 Fair Trade Handcraft Sales with 550 attendees.
- * 4 teacher credential education classes for 3 hour seminars reaching 118 teachers/soon to be teachers plus three conferences
- * A Burma Reality Tour including three scholarship college students! Join us to South Africa/Botswana July '14

And we couldn't have done it without you!

Our volunteers are amazing! Thank SOOOO much!

Mike knows our Mac and solves many problems!

Antoni is the miracle man who can hook everything up so it does what it's supposed to. (Technology is wonderful when it works! And when it doesn't we call on them!)

Meiyu gets *voices* on the web, puts all the lesson plans and links where they should be and amazingly quickly!

Gay Lynn makes the display boards and sorts and files and more! And joins John and Arlene for the mailings.

And thanks to you who contribute to keep us afloat and able to offer scholarships to low income students to join Reality Tours. Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!