



*our developing world's voices* winter 2013

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Ubuntu in Zulu means: I am because you are, or I am human because we are human!

**I AM BECAUSE YOU ARE** By Robert C. Koehler

<http://commonwonders.com/peace/i-am-because-you-are/> 1/24/13

Their grief is too profound and too public. Their words have to be taken seriously — allowed to mix with the politics and the self-interest and the fear, those generic trivializers of the national conversation.

“This is a Promise we make to our precious children. Because each child, every human life is filled with promise, and though we continue to be filled with unbearable pain we choose love, belief, and hope instead of anger.”

The website is called the [Sandy Hook Promise](#). It advances no particular agenda, except to proclaim . . . the value of life.

**South Africa/Botswana July 14-31 ‘13** Amazing energetic people, natural wonders. South Africa: Johannesburg, Capetown and environs. Botswana: Maun, the Okavamba Delta, Gaborone



Come home energized and hopeful!

\$200 deposit will hold your space for either tour!

**Burma/Myanmar:** We'd like to share our experiences there! Please invite us! Barby had a conversation with Aung San Suu Kyi. There is much

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Join us Sunday March 24: 5 pm potluck 6 pm Burma Update, some crafts for sale, door prizes and more!

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for us to do, she says! We must insist investments provide the poor with better healthcare, education, housing and jobs and NOT profit the military!

**Burma dissolves draconian censorship board** Source: [Mizzima News](#)

The Cabinet decision finalizes a motion in August to lift the policy of prior censorship on all publications, a regulation that had been in place in Burma since 1964. In December 2012 it was announced that the [publication of private daily newspapers](#) will be allowed in the country starting 1 April 2013. Who can afford to do this? There are underground ( actually above ground now) weeklies.

Volunteers are everywhere: The Muslim Free Hospital is open to all. The doctors and RNs are all volunteer of every ethnicity and religion. The Muslim Trust offers free sewing and computer classes to poor women. The teacher is Buddhist, students are diverse. The Metta Hospital Foundation has a clinic, mobile RN program for pre and post natal women and children for six Inlay Lake villages, a free community library and meeting room for NLD.

\* Education is now free, but many families can't afford uniforms and books so the Buddhist schools and after school programs continue.

\* Sanctions lifted has stalled release of remaining political prisoners, and forstalled the military from discouraging violence in Arakan, Kichen and Karen states.

\*\*Check this website for a comprehensive peace plan

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[http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/position\\_paper-\\_burma\\_peace\\_funds.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/position_paper-_burma_peace_funds.pdf)

**Transparency** is needed in Burma, Daw Suu said! The US needs it too.

## **What We Don't Know About Drones**

*Dexter Filkins, The New Yorker*

"Indeed, if there is one overriding factor in America's secret wars - especially in its drone campaign - it's that the U.S. is operating in an information black hole."

[READ MORE](#)

## **Viral Gene in Genetically Engineered Foods Could Promote Disease**

*Dr. Joseph Mercola, Mercola.com*

Mercola reports: "Genetic manipulation of crops, and more recently food animals, is a dangerous game that has repeatedly revealed that assumptions about how genetic alterations work ... are deeply flawed and incomplete."

[READ MORE](#)

## **The Cost of Biofuels in Guatemala - Photographs - NYTimes.com - Hunger Pangs in Guatemala**

The Guatemalan farmers ordinarily raised corn for eating. Now they raise it for sale for gas for cars that they do not drive.

If they have to buy corn for food, it costs double what it was last year.

<http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2013/01/06/world/americas/06guatemala.html> has the story and photos

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**AN INCUBATOR FOR PEACE** By Robert C. Koehler

You're young and prone to trouble. You get triggered quickly. Someone tells you that you've screwed up and you're about to lash back. Then, instead, you think:

1. Look at the other person.
2. Say "OK."
3. Stay calm.

This is what you do. Nothing happens, except that the moment passes and life goes on. Got it?

Another dispatch from Chicago, murder capital of America. How many of the murders — 506 of them last year — were committed by people with no grasp of this particular social skill (accepting criticism or a consequence), or any of the dozen or so tacked to the bulletin board in the peace room at Fenger High School?

These skills, which address an array of very basic life situations — e.g., getting no for an answer, greeting others, getting the teacher's attention, disagreeing appropriately, making an apology, accepting compliments, asking for help and many more — come from the Father Flanagan Boys Town Classroom Social Skills list. The instructions are simple and precise and without moralizing, the equivalent of "lather, rinse, repeat."

As I sat there looking at them, I felt a sudden click of understanding: *This is empowerment!* Knowing how to control yourself is as crucial as knowing how to defend yourself, but its value is generally overlooked or dismissed as obvious. Yet as I contemplated these simply stated skills, I was able to imagine not knowing them — and then imagine how disastrously out of control my life would be without such knowledge. These simple instructions are among the building blocks of personal peace.

(Ed's noter: Meditation is being taught in Georgia schools and other cities because it's been shown to calm and help focus! Kaiser Hospitals are offering meditation CDs to promote wellness and speed healing after surgery!! They also urge positive thinking.)

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### HONDURAS: The Struggle Continues!

In the aftermath of the U.S. backed coup of June 2009, a massive popular resistance has arisen in Honduras. The National Popular Resistance Front has successfully united farm workers, urban laborers, including teachers, feminists, militant youth, LGBT, and environmentalists. Thousands mobilized daily in the streets. Most recently they organized an electoral wing, the Libre Party, which broke the two-party electoral monopoly in the national primary elections. The wife of ousted President Zelaya is the presidential candidate for the Libre party in the election this year.

A man walks past a mural portraying President Hugo Chavez and South American liberator Simon Bolivar at the 23 de Enero neighbourhood, in Caracas on March 5, 2013.



Hugo Chávez, the president of Venezuela, died in a military hospital after a long battle against cancer, Reuters reported, prompting a wave of mourning in the country he ruled since 1999 with a globally distinctive and influential style of leadership and throughout Latin America for he was the father of ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our Americas) which includes Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Cuba, and Ecuador.) the cooperative trade alliance. And Mercursur a cooperative banking system that doesn't depend on the US dollar.

Why does his name conjure up such hate? Born into a poor family, he joined the military, a secure job, realized the corruption of the government and staged a coup which failed and landed him in prison. Later each time he ran for president he won overwhelmingly. He nationalized the oil company, decreased the percentage of the value of the oil that foreign companies would get from 84% to 70%, and set up a foundation ( Pedevesa) to channel the oil profits directly to community projects, (some of which we saw), made education and healthcare free, had a literacy campaign, a variety of new housing schemes, many new jobs, land to the landless ( using untilled land). You can figure what antagonized wealthy Venezuelans and US corporations!

Would we as human beings be better off if there were fewer poor in the world, more educated and healthy? Would we have fewer enemies, less need for weapons and military foreign policies?

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Scroll down further for more of the reality of our foreign policy past and present!

US Latin America Policy Explained: Alliance for Global Justice [james@afgj.org](mailto:james@afgj.org) 6/25/'12

## **USAID Grants \$3 Million to Solidarity Center's Bogotá Office—Unionists**

**Want to Know Why** by James Jordan (excerpted) The Solidarity Center office in Bogotá got an unusually large two-year grant of \$3 million from USAID (the United States Agency for International Development). Given the history of the Bogotá office and the Solidarity Center's Andean representatives, observers expect major implications for the countries of Colombia and Venezuela. The Andean region also covers Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. The Solidarity Center has offices both in Colombia and Peru

Three key developments—in Venezuela, the October '12 elections, and in Colombia, the implementation of the new Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the US, coinciding with a massive popular mobilization to demand a political solution to the armed and social conflict. Documented history of the AFL-CIO shows intervention in Venezuela through its Solidarity Center. There are four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) a creation of the United States' largest union center, the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Unions): the Solidarity Center, the International Republican Institute (associated with the Republican Party), the National Democratic Institute (associated with the Democratic Party), and the International Center for Private Enterprise (associated with the Chambers of Commerce). The NED was established by the US government in 1983, during the Reagan administration.

The NED exists to manipulate governments, social movements and elections in other countries to advance the international policies of the US designed to accommodate private access to natural resources and increase transnational corporate profits. To the New York Times in 1991, Allen Weinstein, one of the NED's founders, said that, "A lot of what we do today was done covertly by the CIA."

Marc Plattner, a NED Vice President, explains in the context of the Imperial strategy that brings together in one fabric the threads of politics, business and the military: "Liberal democracy clearly favors the economic arrangements that foster globalization .... The international order that sustains globalization is underpinned by American military predominance." 90% of funding of the Solidarity Center is from the public coffers (the Department of State, USAID and the NED. Union contributions are typically around p 6

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2%. Local unions have no input or say. The Solidarity Center has some good and helpful programs and some that are at least more or less benign. But these good programs can act to hide a more fundamental purpose to infiltrate and influence the labor movements of other countries and to provide a channel of interference in their electoral processes.

The NED's first "success" in Latin America was the defeat of Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista candidate for President, in the Nicaraguan elections of 1990. The US government, via the NED and other channels, spent more than \$20 per voter and effectively bought the victory for Violeta Chamorra, its favored candidate. The US spent more per Nicaraguan voter in 1990 than both parties did in the US presidential elections in 1988. At the time, Nicaragua had a population of only 3 million persons.

Haiti: in 2004, the Solidarity Center's partner, the International Republican Institute, not only funded, but convened and trained the coup plotters against the elected government of Pres. Bertrand Aristide. During '04 and '05, before the coup and extending into the months after there was a bloodbath against the supporters of Aristide that included members of the Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH). Years later, by '09, when the CTH changed its positions and approved a proposal for factories that paid half the minimum wage established by the Aristide administration, the Solidarity Center began to fund the CTH with grants of more than \$200,000. With such funding, the CTH participated in the Preval administration electoral council that excluded the participation of Lavalas, Aristide's party, in the elections despite it being Haiti's largest political party..

In Venezuela, like the Bogotá office today, managed by Rhett Doumitt who during and before the 2002 coup attempt helped channel funds to Carlos Ortega and the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV), a union confederation that had a corrupt, anti-democratic reputation.

Purdue University North Central sociologist and long-time labor activist Kim Scipes tells "...according to a January-March 2002 quarterly report from the Solidarity Center to NED discovered...by journalists Jeremy Bigwood and Eva Golinger...Solidarity Center culminated in a national meeting on March 5, 2002, CTV and FEDECAMARAS...were anointed "flagship organizations" in the struggle against President Chavez...the events leading to the coup attempt.: on April 11th, a massive march in support of the union called for supporters to march on the Presidential Palace, Miraflores,demand Chavez's resignation' (Golinger, 2005: 96). The coup took place but didn't succeed due to popular demand in the streets.Then US unionists began to demand that the Solidarity Center open its books concerning its activities past, present and future in order to ensure its transparency and begin the process of ending its financial dependency on the US government. They urged the Solidarity Center to turn over funding and direction to

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legitimate union organizations, assuring maximum participation of the AFL-CIO's grass-roots base. **(This is a bit of insight into how the State Department engineers its will.)** Especially with Venezuela's recent elections and now the death of Pres. Chávez, the US/Corporate Empire is sure to be looking at any and all opportunities to derail the Bolivarian Revolution.

Unionists working for better wages, better working conditions and a positive transformation of Colombian society are called guerrillas. Transnational corporate sponsored terrorism has left hundreds of thousands dead and has displaced as many as 5 million mostly rural Colombians.

Both Colombia's Attorney General and the National Labor School report the number one reason that Colombian unionists are killed is because they are perceived by paramilitaries and military personnel as being guerrillas or sympathizers. So when US Embassy and Solidarity Center personnel and collaborationist union leaders accuse Left unionists of being "ambiguous" or "sympathetic" to guerrillas, these false allegations add to the atmosphere of terror and violence: famous cases: murders of union leaders by thugs paid by transnational corporations such as Drummond Coal, Coca-Cola and Chiquita Banana—it is clear that the AFL-CIO and the Solidarity Center are not serving the interests of Colombian workers.

With the present-day Obama administration, there is a profound conflict on the part of the AFL-CIO. AFL-CIO members mostly opposed FTAs, especially with Colombia. But AFL-CIO leadership, completely tied to the Democratic Party. While it opposed the FTA, it didn't want to embarrass Obama whose dominant policies toward Colombia have been to consolidate and augment transnational corporate access to the country's natural resources. The FTA is part of this, and also the commitment to military engagement and dominance. Corporations and big land owners do not want peace because with a sustainable and just peace would come land reform.

What is hidden in this damaging and secretive shell game and what will be supported by the \$3 million USAID funding for Solidarity Center activities in Venezuela during the upcoming election due to Hugo Chavez' death?

The US/Corporate Empire sees in Venezuela and Colombia a double-sided door that opens up all of South America and, indeed, Latin America. Influencing and manipulating labor movements and organizations is a very important tactic. Yes, the needs and struggles of the Colombian and Venezuelan labor movements are very different from each other. But what matters to the Solidarity Center and its State Department patrons is that, together, these movements are keys that they would use to open this door, unlocking a new period of re-colonization and unobstructed corporate profits. p 8

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