This issue highlights experiences of democracy and dictatorship in Latin America, documenting the conference CUSLAR hosted with La Visión Latinoamericana at Cornell University in September and expanding on many of the pressing issues discussed there.

At right: Estela Barnes de Carlotto of the Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo of Argentina gives the conference keynote address. Read her full talk in Spanish and English inside.
Latin America provides guidance in rights struggles

by Tim Shenk

Judite Stronzake, a leader of the Landless Workers’ Movement of Brazil, spoke of the military dictatorship suffered by Brazilians from 1964 to 1985, as well as a “new global economic dictatorship” that has led to unprecedented inequality in her country and around the globe.

‘Poverty in the midst of plenty’

We have taken Stronzake’s analysis seriously and think it important that this newsletter’s debates on democracy be situated in the context of the global economy. The 2008 economic crisis made clearer what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called “poverty in the midst of plenty.”

While Wall Street and other global financial centers are stronger than ever, labor-eliminating technologies have led to a “jobless recovery” in the U.S., which means more people are out of work for longer periods of time. The jobs they do find are more likely to be low-wage, part-time and temporary: low-wage jobs make up over half of the new jobs added to the economy since 2010.

Saket Soni, Director of the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, calls this sort of precarious work “the future of work” in the United States. “In their time, the farmer and then the auto worker were seen as the quintessential American worker,” Soni said. “Now it’s the Walmart cashier and the immigrant laborer. They’re no longer on the margins – rather, these part-time, subcontracted workers with no health care are the leading edge of where the U.S. economy is going.”

This shift in the labor market is taking a toll on the most vulnerable. Twenty-two percent of U.S. children are now in poverty, and recent cuts to food stamps affect one out of every seven people.

CUSLAR’s response: The Paulo Freire Program

As U.S. families increasingly deal with crises of health care, housing, debt and unemployment, CUSLAR and our partners around the country have seen a need to strengthen our relationships with Latin American groups, as we seek guidance in building strong communities and organizations.

With this in mind, CUSLAR launched the Paulo Freire Engaged Practitioners Program in September 2013 as a space to study together and to connect with Latin American organizations at the forefront of struggles for human rights.

Often theory and strategy on issues such as fair development, participatory budgeting and the right to food, housing and education are quite advanced in Latin America, and it benefits us to learn what’s working in other places and what isn’t.

As the first Freire Practitioner, Stronzake spent a month with us, giving over two dozen presentations and lectures to university groups and U.S. social movement organizations in Ithaca, Syracuse, New York City and Philadelphia. Her expertise on issues of food sovereignty and political education processes was of special interest to local groups.

We plan to continue exchanges with the Landless Workers (MST) through CUSLAR’s Freire Program and an emerging national network called the University of the Poor.

Global efforts to unite the poor

Stronzake said, “We organize on an international level because we understand no community can survive on its own.” Exchange and mutual study, much of it hosted at the MST’s Florestan Fernandes National School, allows the movement to develop common understanding and unity of strategy with organizations working in other countries and continents.

For example, in November the MST, partner organizations and residents of Rio de Janeiro’s slums hosted two members of the Shackdwellers Movement, an organization of over 12,000 members demanding housing and dignity in South Africa’s fast-developing cities.

“We have come to Brazil to learn and share our struggle because every country has a division between the poor and the rich,” Shackdwellers representative Bandile Mdlalose told a reporter in Rio. “Our struggle is not only about houses but about human dignity. This visit is about sharing information and our struggles.”

Because the South African and Brazilian poor face similar threats from exclusionary mega-projects and development, Brazilians found many familiar images in the documentary Dear Mandela, which portrays the Shackdwellers’ struggle.

We see the Freire Program as a space for similar dialogues and exchange that will help to solve society’s greatest problems and support human rights here and abroad.
Struggles for democracy highlighted at two-day Latin American Congress

by Antonio Henríquez García

“My mea culpa,” expressed Barnes de Carlotto in an emotional tone while remembering the bombing of Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires in 1955, “is that if I had gone out with the people to denounce that dictatorship, my daughter Laura would still be alive.” Thus her struggle began, through years of oppressive dictatorship by the military regime of the extreme right, Asociación Civil Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo emerged not only as an organized movement to search for loved ones who had been disappeared, but also as part of a movement of social civil resistance to an authoritative regime that was a violator of human rights.

It has been almost thirty years since the overthrow of the last military dictatorships in Latin America. The struggle of Abuelas, as expressed by Buscarita Roa, who together with Barnes de Carlotto presented at the conference and told her experience of finding her lost grandson, has been unyielding.

To this day, Abuelas has been able to find 109 lost grandchildren, the most recent of whom was found in August 2013. The organization commits to continue its mission until the last grandchild has been found.

For its part, the representative of the National Coordination of the MST, Judite Stronzake, expressed that while the last military dictatorship in Brazil ended in 1985, the rural workers have faced a type of permanent dictatorship by private corporations. These, in her opinion, are guilty of hoarding natural resources that supply the basic needs of the rural population.

The struggle continues. The contributions of Barnes de Carlotto and Stronzake have without a doubt made it clear that in order to understand the current struggle, it’s necessary to understand its origin and history. This gives us insight about our initial question.

La Visión Latinoamericana was founded in 2012 as a non-profit organization with the purpose of promoting the knowledge and understanding of the academic community of the diverse realities that face the peoples of Latin America. While our organization is above all educational and politically impartial, La Visión Latinoamericana appreciates and shares the spirit of initiative of any organization whose purpose is social improvement.

La Visión Latinoamericana extends a special thanks to Cornell University and Ithaca College professors who helped to moderate the discussion roundtables on Saturday, September 28. Thanks to their contribution, a wide arrange of debate took place whose diverse array of topics helped to broaden the scope of the conference. Seven debate roundtables were relevant to countries from the Southern Cone, Brazil, Central America and the Caribbean.

Having concluded a successful conference, La Visión Latinoamericana fixes its gaze on the future and extends an invitation to anyone who identifies with our mission to join our programming team.
Of course there were protest movements especially among university students, and among the working class. The dictatorship was always supported by the wealthy class, that is, the oligarchy, and all of those who had a personal interest. I always say our history books were incomplete, because none of this was ever told.

There was a bloody coup again in 1955. The military usurped power by bombing the Plaza de Mayo, the main square in our Buenos Aires. Hundreds of people were killed in these bombings. People on their way to work, a group of children who were on a school bus. And the next day there was no protest from the families of these victims.

I was in agreement with these illegal actions, because the education I had had made me think it was okay, that it was not illegal.

I was 25. My eldest daughter Laura was an infant in my arms, and I celebrated the deaths.

I say this because my mea culpa is that if I had taken to the streets with the people to denounce the dictatorship, my daughter Laura would be alive today. That is a thought for anyone anywhere in the world who justifies death.

In 1976 Laura and my three oldest children were part of the student movement. When repression of that last dictatorship began, we parents were generally terrified, and we wanted to discourage our children from doing what they were doing. Out of love, we didn’t want the history we had experienced to be repeated.

Sometimes people ask us how the Grandmothers can still be going after 36 years of struggle. We keep going because Laura and her 30,000 compatriots gave us an example of courage. We continue to seek answers to what the dictatorship did. It is a lifetime commitment we have made.

During that dictatorship, more than 360 clandestine detention centers were created in Argentina. There they took people of all ages and walks of life. It was there that they were tortured, to extract information from them. Then they killed them, and their bodies were disappeared.

When among the victims they found a pregnant woman, they let her live until her baby was born at the detention center.
The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo are looking for those two generations: our children and our grandbabies born in captivity.

We persevere because we need to know the truth, have memory and obtain justice.

When the Grandmothers group began, we were alone with our fear and ignorance, and we were in danger. Then we began finding each other, and we formed an indestructible group. Through this unity we have managed to find 109 grandchildren.

Some of us still have not had the joy of finding our family members, while others have been able to embrace their grandchild and tell them their real history.

There is much more to tell – it has been 36 years. But we are here to share ideas on how to achieve peace.

We cannot say we live in peace when we know there are children dying from starvation or simple illnesses, when we know about countries wealthy in resources but with impoverished people, where wealth is stolen by those who claim to be democratic.

So I say thank you on my behalf and on behalf of all of the Grandmothers, for this chance to get to know each other, look each other in the eyes and know that here great ideas will surely be generated.

In closing, I want you to understand that this Argentine dictatorship implemented a systematic plan to steal babies.

After the birth of the children in those detention centers, they were taken away from our daughters, who were then murdered.

We don’t know of any other country in the world, even in conventional wars, where this abhorrent practice of stealing babies for political reasons has happened. This should never happen again.

So I’ll close with a short phrase that we say in Argentina: Never again! Thank you.

**Buscarita Roa**

Good evening, everyone. Thank you for having us here.

I am Chilean, and I have lived in Argentina for the past 38 years. I have had to endure two dictatorships, both in Chile and Argentina.

My son was a student who was involved in political activity in Chile. He suffered a railway accident at age 16, and the train severed both of his legs.

He went to Argentina to have rehabilitation treatment and to get prosthetic legs. In Argentina he continued his political work in a rehabilitation center for disabled people. Unfortunately, he was participating – well, I’m happy he was involved in politics – but the unfortunate thing was that he was disappeared.

Since that day, November 28, 1978, I’ve been participating in the organization called Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, looking for the remains of my son, my daughter-in-law and my little granddaughter who was eight months old.

I continue to work with the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, but I found my granddaughter 13 years ago when she was 22. I was lucky to find my granddaughter. Not all of the grandmothers have had this luck, but finding your grandchild is the most beautiful thing that can happen in this organization.

The Grandmothers have a national genetic database where we have blood samples from relatives who are still alive, to do DNA tests for these young adults who aren’t children anymore.

We have been looking for our grandchildren for nearly four decades, and we’ve found 109 of them. They are now adults and happy to have regained their true identities.

It’s not easy for them – they have grown up with a family that was not theirs. The majority was taken by members of the Armed Forces. After their parents were killed, these children were distributed among military families to be raised as their own. Of course these were illegal adoptions. They were not even adoptions, but rather stolen babies.

My granddaughter was raised with a colonel’s family, who took her from the clandestine center where she was with her parents. The colonel took her to his home to raise her as his own daughter, changing her true identity.

She of course had a name from her biological family. Her name was Claudia Victoria Poblete Hlaczik, but the colonel gave her the name Mercedes Beatriz Landa Moreira. She grew up with this name until age 22 when the Grandmothers were able to restore her true identity, so she would know who she really was.

It hasn’t been easy. Imagine – a young woman at age 22 finds out she isn’t the daughter of the family that raised her. For these kids it’s very difficult.

Over time, she has begun to realize that the best thing that happened to her was to know who she is. She has told me, “Thank you, Grandma, for looking for me.”
Judite Stronzake, a member of the National Coordination of the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) of Brazil, gave the closing address at the Latin American Conference on Democracy and Dictatorship at Cornell University on September 28, 2013. The following is a translation of her address.

**Judite Stronzake**

Good afternoon to the conference organizers, students, teachers, researchers and social activists.

On behalf of the MST and La Vía Campesina, it is an honor to have the space to be able to share our current experiences on such a profound and complex topic for the peoples and social movements of Latin America and the Caribbean. Thank you very much for the invitation.

In these last years, in the last twenty years in particular, in our countries and in Brazil, what we’ve had is a representative democracy. Every four years we have the opportunity to participate with our vote. After 21 years of dictatorship in Brazil, from 1964 to 1985, the working class and the organizations achieved a democratic opening.

So having a democratic and representative regime with legislative, judiciary, and executive powers with institutions, rules and the existence of a constituent assembly is very important for the democratic process. But we must understand that it is insufficient. We vote but there are not mechanisms in place for a more direct and participatory democracy. So the democracy that we have is insufficient from the point of view of social participation. It is necessary to have a political system where the people are sovereign, opening paths to heed popular demands and aspirations such as free, quality education; quality public transportation; land, urban and tax reforms; renationalization of privatized companies; and free, quality healthcare.

In our democracy, we have a constitution. When the military dictatorship was overthrown in 1985, the mass movement put the need for new institutions in Brazil on the agenda. Despite the advances in social rights, some which only stay on paper, the Constitution of 1988 preserved many institutions created and strengthened by the military regime. For example, militarized police and the agrarian structure. In spite of this, there is a very important article, Article 184, which states that all land must fulfill its social function. The land that does not comply must be expropriated and distributed among landless peasants or preserved in indigenous territories. It is democratization of access to land.

In addition to this, all of the land that employs slave labor or that’s linked to drug trafficking has to be expropriated by the government and also distributed to landless peasants.

So from the point of view of our current democracy, we’ve advanced. But, at the same time my country is the world champion in concentration of land. In Brazil, one percent of the population owns 46 percent of the land.

The democracy that we have now is important. But we have to create mechanisms so that society can also intervene on a constitutional basis with its organizations and movements. We must also create new mechanisms for society to be able to say what they want and what they don’t want for the present and the future of the country.

A concrete fact is that there must be a model of direct democracy so our people can decide whether or not they want to consume seven liters of toxic chemicals each year.

Nobody consulted us about whether we want to swallow seven liters of chemicals in our water and food every year. We’re obligated to consume this. So, what degree of democracy do we have? We’re obligated to consume agrotoxins and genetically modified food every day, junk food that only causes sicknesses and cancer, which has no remedy.

Therefore, the questions we have to ask today are: Democracy for what? Democracy for whom? Democracy for which social groups? And what type of democracy do we want?

Brazil ended its dictatorship 21 years ago. Today we’re the sixth largest economy in the world. But we rank 85 on the index of human social development.

From an economic point of view, Brazil is doing well. But from the point of view of human development, our country is in the same condition as many of the most underdeveloped nations in the world.

This causes us to think that there is a new dictatorship that operates through the international institutions of our bourgeois state. Why do we think this? We read the international agreements.

With the global crisis of international finance capital there has been a search for wealth in natural sources. The land, water, biodiversity and minerals. All of this is backed by international agreements between large companies, institutions, governments and states.

The peasant and indigenous communities are most affected by this model of production on an international level. So we say that this is the new type of dictatorship that we currently have.

There has been a new unity in the last 20 years between transnational companies, international finance capital — which are the bankers — and landowners that have created a new model of dictatorship that threatens peasants. It’s called agribusiness.

And the consequences of this? Its what we eat — patterned and genetically modified food.

In Brazil we have a culture of eating rice and beans everyday. They’re trying to impose another culture of food that’s not...
Without land reform, there is no democracy’

In a protest in Brazil, the Landless Workers’ Movement demands land reform and the right to consume non-GMO foods. Photo provided by the MST.

ours with fast food. They know this quite well. It’s the burgers, the McDonalds restaurants.

There’s also a change with seeds. Agribusiness is trying to take native seeds. Social movements are carrying out a strong resistance to keep and preserve native seeds in the communities.

This is the same model with water. There’s a lot of privatization and attempts to privatize water. This too is part of the new model of dictatorship that we have. Our communities say that water is a common good. It doesn’t belong to companies. A liter of water costs 4 reais, or 2 dollars. A liter of gasoline is cheaper than a liter of water.

They’ve created their own crises. They’ve produced them to attack peasants and indigenous people to take their natural resources and to mine on their land. And what do they create? The transnational companies, international finance capital and agribusinesses want to create a countryside without peasants.

They’ve already achieved this in Europe. In many countries in Europe only 1 percent of the population lives in the rural areas.

Agribusinesses are producing in monocultures, large extensions of high quality land for food production. They produce sugarcane, soy, oranges, corn, and eucalyptus. All for it is for exportation.

United Nations specialist Jean Ziegler confirms that as a consequence, there is so much hunger in the world that every five minutes there is a child that dies of hunger in the world. He says, “hunger in the world is equal to organized crime.”

Another current model of dictatorship is that the mass media has united with transnational companies, the banking sector, and agribusiness so that people do not realize the truth, alienating them from reality and creating a world of consumerism, individualism and competition.

To conclude, I want to share a little of our understanding of democracy. One idea that we pose is that without land reform there is no democracy.

We must democratize access to land. The majority of the owners of the large extensions of land in Brazil come from the 500 largest transnational companies in the world that produce genetically modified and patterned food. We understand that if there is no democratization of land, democracy is not strengthened. Today we believe in popular agrarian reform for all of Brazilian society.

Another proposal of democracy is that each community and each group must have the right to decide what they eat and how they eat. Genetically modified and patterned food should not be imposed by transnational companies. We want democracy with food sovereignty.

A third proposal is democratization of access to knowledge and to universities. We demand access to free, quality education. And also access to quality public transportation and healthcare.

There are some people in my country who have never seen a doctor. Now, a month ago the government of Brazil made an agreement with Cuba, and 6,000 Cuban doctors arrived in Brazil to work in peasant and indigenous communities, located farther from the large urban centers. Welcome, Cuban doctors, to Brazil!

Six thousand doctors have come from Cuba, but at the same time we have to create more medical schools so that workers who would like to practice medicine can become doctors as well.

Democracy must also consist of jobs with dignified salaries so that people can live with dignity. People must have access to transportation, and housing, sports and culture. The right to have celebrations, music, art and fun must be fulfilled.

We need to create mechanisms for direct participation in society so that we are not waiting to vote every four years with the hope that just the gesture of our vote makes structural changes in the country.

A problem that we have in our continent is that democracy must not mean intervention of countries in other countries. There is currently a military intervention in Haiti by MINUSTAH, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. The Haitians need their sovereignty, not an army. There are military bases like this in other places around Latin America and the Caribbean -- just in Colombia there are seven.

Also, democracy must mean that social movements can protest and have manifestations in whatever country without being considered terrorists. It is the right of the people to come and go and have freedom of opinion.

These forms of dictatorship and domination are the experiences of the people without land, the peasants, the indigenous people and the afro-descendants in my country. These are times of intense battles for basic human rights.

We have to push the government to resist the demands of the transnational companies. It’s a permanent battle. We must remain in the streets so that the government works for the benefit of the working class and not for the interests of large corporations and agribusiness.

Thank you very much!
It’s not just about 20 cents

The protests began over rising bus fares but quickly escalated into a condemnation of broader societal ills. Protesters decried the deficient public education and health systems, as well as the government’s lack of transparency and accountability. These massive protests come at a time when Brazil, the sixth largest economy in the world, is experiencing tremendous economic growth. But this growth has not been accompanied by adequate social services or reforms, and corruption is rampant among Brazilian politicians.

President Dilma Rousseff responds

As the demonstrations grew in size and scope, so did their demands. Protesters were successful in reducing bus fares in many cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. However, the Brazilian government realized that surface-level solutions would not be enough.

The pressure placed on elected officials resulted in greater funds to improve urban infrastructure, especially in São Paulo. Congress also passed a resolution that oil royalties would fund public education and health.

Despite these initiatives, many Brazilians believe that official corruption is still widespread. The government continues to face increasing criticism, with PEC-37, a proposed constitutional amendment that would have stripped the Public Ministry’s ability to properly investigate crimes and corruption.

Although these initiatives have been met with criticism and skepticism, they mark a shift in governmental relations with the public. The people have communicated that closed-door dealings will not be tolerated, and that they will continue to pressure for accountability and equality.

Expect more protests

Brazilians are realizing their country’s economic growth is not translating into equally shared benefits proportionate to the economic growth. The continuation of corrupt officials, de facto political immunity and lavish spending on stadiums means it is unlikely the protestors will be satisfied anytime soon. Until they are, we should expect to see more demonstrations from this newly revitalized political consciousness of the Brazilian population.

Diana Folla is a senior at Cornell University studying Urban and Regional Studies with a minor in Latin American Studies.

LEARN MORE!

Simon Romero and William Neuman, “Sweeping protests in Brazil pull in an array of grievances.”

www.nytimes.com/2013/06/21/world/americas/brazil-protests.html?_r=0
CUSLAR launches Paulo Freire Program

by Diana Folla

During the Fall 2013 semester, CUSLAR launched the Paulo Freire Engaged Practitioners Program and welcomed its first guest, Judite Stronzake of Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement (MST). During her stay, Stronzake engaged with students, faculty and U.S. social movement organizers on various issues such as food sovereignty, land rights and Brazilian politics.

Stronzake has been involved with the MST since its founding in 1984 and is part of the national leadership team. She is also the regional coordinator for political education, or formação, for La Via Campesina in Latin America. Her month-long tour in the U.S. included time in Ithaca, Syracuse, New York City and Philadelphia.

Food sovereignty, Brazilian politics and the ‘new global dictatorships’

Stronzake’s visit comes at a momentous time in Brazilian politics, following the massive protests of millions six months ago. Her discussions aligned with the protestors’ demands for an end to corruption and economic inequality, as well as better healthcare and public education.

Stronzake’s talks provided insight into struggles that the MST and peasants worldwide face today. She spoke extensively about the “new global dictatorships,” comprised of transnational corporations, agribusiness, and global financial capital, which now dominate how food is produced and distributed. While her experience with the MST has been focused on the education and organization of landless peasants, Stronzake framed the struggles of the movement within the broader context of deep socioeconomic inequality in Brazil. She also positioned these challenges within the rural-urban relationship, discussing how the absence of agrarian reform has led to many structural problems in society.

Stronzake noted that as a result, the MST, La Via Campesina and peasants worldwide are fighting against more than agribusiness and corporations. They are fighting for the sociopolitical conditions for true food sovereignty.

In NYC: at the University of the Poor

Following her stay in Ithaca, Stronzake spoke with leaders at the University of the Poor in New York City, a network dedicated to developing leaders committed to the unity of the poor and dispossessed to build a movement to end poverty.

Stronzake’s visit allowed for discussion about the global nature of the current economic crisis and the role of social movements in solving problems like poverty and hunger.


At Cornell, she engaged with the Latin American Studies Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, the Cornell Food Collective and the Center for Engaged Learning + Research. She delivered a keynote address at the Democracy and Dictatorship in Latin America Conference at Cornell. Stronzake spoke at Ithaca College, Wells College, Syracuse University and the Syracuse Peace Council, the Poverty Initiative in New York City and the Media Mobilizing Project in Philadelphia. Her visit was co-sponsored by the Cornell Student Activities Finance Commission, Telluride House, the Dorothy Cotton Institute, the Center for Transformative Action and the Cornell ISS Land Project.

Paulo Freire Engaged Practitioners Program

Inspired by the pedagogy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, the Freire Program seeks to engage members in discussion surrounding issues of human rights, education, international development, political economy and related subjects. It promotes dialogue on these critical issues by hosting speakers and events, and by building relationships with Latin American scholars and human rights leaders.

Freire study group

A key element of the Freire program was the Freire Study Group, which convened regularly at the New Roots Charter School in Ithaca and attracted a diverse group, including students and professors from Cornell and Ithaca College and local community leaders.

Kirby Edmonds of the Dorothy Cotton Institute described the study group as a “place to discuss overall strategy,” adding that it provided a “good chance to analyze our own situation, to ask how our reality here is different.”

The discussions were shaped by readings from various scholars, including Freire himself. These readings placed the sociopolitical and economic situation of the United States in juxtaposition with that of Latin America.

Stronzake attended two sessions, where she discussed the pedagogical philosophy of the MST and her experience as a movement educator.

Future collaboration and exchange

Through events with Stronzake, the Freire Program helped to build relationships among students, academics and community members in various academic institutions, community organizations and international movements. The month-long program fostered significant discussions and laid the groundwork for future collaboration with the MST and La Via Campesina and established a space for dialogue to address the systemic inequalities we face as a society today.
POPULAR AGRARIAN REFORM

a top priority as MST prepares for its 6th National Congress

The Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) of Brazil has been preparing for its 6th National Congress since 2011 through meetings, workshops and debates on the national, regional, state and local levels.

Judite Stronzake, a member of the MST National Coordination and CUSLAR’s first Paulo Freire Engaged Practitioner in Fall 2013, summarizes here some of the results of the organizational process that leads the MST into its February 2014 National Congress.

by Judite Stronzake

During the week of February 10-14, 2014, the MST will hold our 6th National Congress with the slogan: “Struggle to build popular agrarian reform.” We will gather in Brazil’s capital city, Brasilia, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of MST and make public the strategies we’ve discussed over the past years.

First I will share some of what we are up against in Brazil, and then I’ll explain our slogan and strategy.

The state of Brazilian agriculture

Since the 2008 global crisis, we have observed a flood of foreign capital, both financial capital and fictitious, coming from the north to the southern hemisphere. This money has been invested in agriculture, the private appropriation of nature -- land, water, sources of energy, minerals and native seeds -- and in the control of commodities -- sugar cane, soybeans, corn, hogs, poultry, cocoa, oranges and beef cattle. In Brazil between 2008 and 2012 about $80 billion in foreign capital has entered the country to acquire natural goods and control biodiversity.

In addition, financial capital from the northern hemisphere has led an offensive to control the mineral wealth of Brazil -- our iron, bauxite, gold, copper and other minerals -- as well as to control energy sources such as oil, natural gas, ethanol, hydroelectric plants and wind farms.

Brazil’s macroeconomic model has not changed with the change of government, maintaining its focus on profits based on speculation.

Brazilian agribusiness

International financial capital and transnational corporations developed the agribusiness model, transforming nature and biodiversity into commodities for profit. In turn, agribusiness has had a significant role in developing financial capital: generating trade surpluses to expand exchange reserves, a prerequisite for attracting speculative capital to Brazil. Agribusiness protects unproductive land for future expansion of its operations, freezing land distribution in any state agrarian reform programs.

In acting through legal channels to protect the interests of the elite class, the Brazilian state plays a vital role in ensuring the hegemony of the industrial model of agricultural production. The state guarantees transfer of public resources through investment and through required financing mechanisms.

Contradictions in the agribusiness model

Agribusiness is completely dependent on the use of agricultural poisons in increasing volume and intensity. Brazil consumes 20 percent of world poison production, and we have been the world leader since 2009. The average pesticide use was around 7 kilos per hectare in 2005 in Brazil, but in 2011 the average had risen to 10.1 kilos. These agrotoxins destroy biodiversity, undermine the environment, contribute to climate change and affect human health with the proliferation of incurable diseases and cancers. The agribusiness model cannot produce without these chemicals.

Private control of seeds by transnational corporations threatens the family farm model and food sovereignty in Brazil. Whoever controls seeds and seedlings controls agriculture as a whole.

Global capital has organized the world division of labor and production, setting up the countries of the Global South to be exporters of raw agricultural materials, minerals and labor. This will increase global inequalities and therefore social, economic and political conflicts.

The agribusiness model, unlike the earlier stage of industrial capitalism, does not distribute rents or generate employment. Agribusiness achieves production without farmers. This will bring about the lack of a future labor tradition for youth, as well as increased migration and depopulation of Brazil’s interior of Brazil. Agribusiness permanently expels workers from the land.

However, in a second stage, after they concentrate production and make new investments, they will not be able to bring labor back to the countryside to work, especially young workers. Thus they have generated a contradiction: this model does not create jobs or produce social welfare.

STRUGGLE TO BUILD POPULAR AGRARIAN REFORM

The MST’s slogan for the National Congress was developed collectively. From January 2012 through August of 2013 we held discussions and consultations among members, teachers, friends and family, intellectuals and social activists.

Historical meaning

The motto of our 6th Congress shows the historical moment in which the MST is acting, and at the same time it presents the challenges of continuing the struggles, demonstrations, and building our organization and permanent political formation process.

The slogan tells our base in the MST and our allies that we stand firm in defense of our political objectives set in 1984: fighting for land, agrarian reform and social transformation.
‘Struggle...’

Struggle is the essence, nature and origin of the MST. It is the principle that has always been the engine that drives the decisions and motivations of our practices and collective actions.

The struggle is the basis of social movements, of political organization and economic struggle. We learn that all our achievements are the result of many different forms of collective struggles and popular resistance. Continuing the struggle is our only guarantee of economic and political benefits for those who carry them out. Our leader, Florestan Fernandes, taught us: “Struggle always. Don’t let yourselves be co-opted or defeated, and win concrete demands to improve the lives of the people.”

‘To build...’

The second part of our slogan will guide us in the coming period: “Build popular agrarian reform.”

Building denotes a process of organizing, training and mobilizing our people.

Building is a reference of the future of the working class. Our task is to build popular agrarian reform as a strategic mission, linked to the political struggle against capitalism and for a popular project for Brazil.

We build popular agrarian reform in the fight against landlords; the export-based monoculture agribusiness model; the corrupt, bureaucratic and bourgeois state; and transnational corporations and international financial capital.

At the same time, we continue expanding our agro-ecological production and strengthening food sovereignty. We build by planting trees, restoring water and our environment. We build schools for children, youth and adults. We build schools for agro-ecological and political training.

We are building toward accumulating strength for a popular political project for Brazil.

‘...Popular agrarian reform’

As part of our 6th National Congress, the MST has developed a proposal for popular agrarian reform. We understand the impossibility of carrying out land reform of the classic style under the hegemony of the elite class, that only portents to distribute land, develop the productive forces in the countryside and subordinate industrial conglomerates.

The MST notes that there has never been an agrarian reform in Brazil, even a limited one, which could have managed at least to dilute the concentration of land. Currently 1 percent owns 46 percent of all land in Brazil. What we propose and are developing is the concept of popular agrarian reform, which goes beyond the classic reforms centered on land distribution.

Popular agrarian reform is born elsewhere: in the confrontation of workers against international finance capital and agribusiness.

Our agrarian reform is a people’s reform because it covers all social forces and individuals who believe that structural changes are needed in Brazil. This will only be possible if we forge a broad alliance with the working class. Agrarian reform must serve all Brazilians.

Popular agrarian reform has a direct link with the historical legacy of the 30 years of the MST and our collective past of massive peasants’ struggles.

This proposal becomes a mechanism to seek alliances with the Brazilian people and develop the relationship we need with the land for the production of inexpensive food for urban workers, in order to build a just, equitable, democratic and fraternal society for all.
Something’s cooking: Food policy debate in Peru

The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo, The incredible variety of Peru’s agriculture makes it a focal point for gastronomy and food policy. Photo: José Toledo.

by Alexandra Toledo

In our food system, where corporations set the table and governments are often all too happy to eat the crumbs that fall from it, people are hungry for a different menu.

In Latin America, farmers are coming together with policy proposals for their governments to make sure everyone has enough to eat and farmers make a fair living. In Peru, there are two proposals on the table, and whether or not they get approved may shape the debate around food policy on an international level.

Peru is a hot spot for food this year. Celebrity chefs celebrate its cuisine worldwide. President Ollanta Humala declared 2013 “The Year of Investment for Rural Development and Food Security.” First Lady Nadine Heredia is Special Ambassador for the International Year of Quinoa, an Andean super-food that is said could end world hunger. Peruvian agricultural exports reached a new high of over $1.7 billion, a quarter of which was sent to the United States, reported Peru this Week in August.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation is hard at work on the National Strategy for Food and Nutritional Security, while the Agrarian Commission of the Congress is moving forward a bill on Food Sovereignty and Food and Nutritional Security. Something’s cooking.

However, the difference between food security and food sovereignty seems to be getting in the way of any of these policy proposals being approved.

Food security is the guarantee of everyone having an adequate supply of food and is based on four elements: access, availability, utilization and stability. Without taking into account how that food is made available, however, food security has been used as a framework to justify free trade and food aid.

Food sovereignty, on the other hand, considers the path to reach food security. It takes into account production methods, participatory decision-making and human rights. Food sovereignty blossomed from peasant movements and intentionally confronts the food system dominated by export agriculture and corporate control.

The official position in Peru is that food sovereignty “is not adequate for this country, a country that has decided for world integration,” as the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Milton Von Hesse, stated at a conference in Lima in June. The Peruvian government believes that food sovereignty threatens the free trade agreements Peru has signed and thus its economic system based on agribusiness and exports.

Indigenous peasant leader turned Congresswoman, Claudia Coari, begs to differ. In a July interview she declared, “The way they are thinking is false…. [Agribusiness representatives] go before Congress and they say, ‘Look, they are going to close the market to us, look at the [Free Trade] Agreement….’ But the Agreement in Peru is already done, we are not going to dispute the Agreement now. What we want now is that the small-scale farmers can also have access, improve their production, and have enough.” Coari introduced the first bill on Food Sovereignty to the Peruvian Congress and, with the help of peasant social movements, got a version approved in the Agrarian Commission.

The definition of food sovereignty in the approved bill, however, does not seem to maintain its radical roots. Instead, the June version of the bill reads: “Food Sovereignty is the capacity of the State to define its own food, agrarian, and fishing policies in the framework of an open economy and respecting international treaties.” We have yet to see if food sovereignty can, indeed, flourish in the same field as the free market economy dominated by multinational corporations and international financial institutions.

The question that arises from Peru’s story is: Does integrating food sovereignty into national policy challenge the hold of corporate agribusiness currently controlling our food systems? Or is the participation of civil society in the democratic process with this policy proposal actually reinforcing the neoliberal food regime?

Food sovereignty is both changing shape and changing the shape of food policy in Peru. The case of Peru has implications beyond its borders, and may change the menu of food policy as we know it.

Take the next step: learn about U.S. agricultural policies

The global food system links us all together. The choices we make about the food we eat are part of the first step to creating a more just food systems. Where is that asparagus from that you bought at the supermarket yesterday? Chances are, it is imported from Peru by a transnational agribusiness. How about buying some spinach from a local farmer instead? As a next step, learn about U.S. agricultural policies and think about how they might impact people around the world. Here’s a good place to start: National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, sustainableagriculture.net

Alexandra Toledo is a graduate student at Indiana University pursuing a Master of Public Affairs and Master of Arts in Latin American Studies.
A new form of ‘dictatorship’: Agribusiness sprouting in Latin America

by Malcolm Temple

Dictatorship has been something all too familiar in Latin America. Much of the undemocratic rule has seemingly subsided since the turn of the 21st century. Yet, as free-trade agreements increasingly dictate national policies in the region and basic rights like food choices quietly cease, some are questioning whether or not a new dictatorship is in power.

“There has been a new unity in the last 20 years between transnational companies, international finance capital—which are the bankers—and landowners,” said Judite Stronzake of Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) at Cornell University in September. “They’ve created a new model of dictatorship that threatens peasants. It’s called agribusiness.”

Peasant and indigenous movements for land have characterized Latin American history since colonial times. Today, however, they are no longer battling the elites of their own nations for land. It appears they now face more obscure and distant elites who are snatching their land and controlling their resources from afar.

As Stronzake explained, they are transnational corporations, namely from China, North America and Gulf States. In an effort to secure food and fuel supplies for their nations, these corporations are buying and leasing massive swaths of land throughout the global south to produce cash crops and biofuels for export.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that China’s largest farming company, Heilongjiang Beidahuang Nongken Group, has made plans to spend $1.5 billion on a lease for 300,000 hectares (741,316 acres) in Argentina’s Rio Negro Province. The Journal also noted that “as much as ten percent of Argentina’s land is already foreign owned.”

Many experts on the global agro-food complex argue that the heightening degree of land grabbing in Latin America has halted re-distributive land policies and has sparked widespread re-concentration of land and wealth. As a result, local peoples are facing mass displacement and small farmers are losing their land to large agribusinesses they cannot compete with.

The influence of agribusiness has even penetrated food production at the local level. Small farmers are increasingly being mandated to adopt new technologies such as genetically modified seeds, fertilizers and herbicides in order to receive credit from banks to produce food—a process that often creates a cycle of dependency on agribusinesses that manufacture these inputs.

In an article published by Environmental Health Perspectives, authors Leo Horrigan, Robert S. Lawrence and Polly Walker state that “[industrial agriculture] contributes to numerous forms of environmental degradation, including air and water pollution, soil depletion, diminishing biodiversity, and fish die-offs.”

Other scientists note that the heavy reliance on chemically based fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides in industrial agriculture significantly threatens human health as well.

Since 2009, Brazil has become the largest consumer of agrotoxins, many of which are banned in the U.S., E.U. and the rest of South America. “Nobody consulted us on whether we want to swallow seven liters of water and food with chemicals every year. We’re obligated to consume this. So, what degree of democracy do we have?” says Stronzake. “We’re obligated to consume agrotoxins and genetically modified food every day, junk food that only causes sicknesses and cancer.”

Despite the negative impact of this model of food production on local communities, the environment and human health, international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) still uphold agribusiness as the most efficient system to feed the planet.

Yet, as the FAO reports no end to world hunger in sight and agribusiness expands as an exorbitantly lucrative enterprise, many are wondering if agribusiness is more concerned with feeding people or feeding bank accounts. Frederick Buttel, author of Hungry for Profit, mentions that in the U.S. alone, the agribusiness sector is the second most profitable industry after pharmaceuticals, with annual sales over $400 billion.

A ripening resistance

As agribusinesses continue to accumulate land in Latin America and throughout the global south, many are challenging their domination over worldwide food production.

The internationally recognized peasant movement, known as La Via Campesina, has linked over 100 grassroots organizations across the globe to shift global discourse on agricultural policy toward the question of food sovereignty.

Although movements such as La Via Campesina have seen much success, work still remains if Latin Americans are to topple this “dictatorship” like the ones of past generations. “We have to push the government to resist the demands of the transnational companies,” says Stronzake. “It’s a permanent battle. We must remain in the streets so that the government works for the benefit of the working class and not for the interests of the large corporations and agribusiness.”

Malcolm Temple is a fourth-year undergraduate student studying Culture and Communication at Ithaca College.
Cornell undergrad leads peers to Intag, Ecuador

by Jessica Barragan

Cornell undergraduate Martin Zorrilla ’13 has found himself at the head of the class, teaching a course on the struggles of his home community in Ecuador and preparing his peers to participate in the Intag Project, a sustainability movement that seeks to conserve the natural resources of Intag.

Zorrilla developed the Fall 2013 course called “Experience Latin America: Ecuador Edition”, which is housed in the Department of International Agriculture and Rural Development. The class seeks to prepare an interdisciplinary group of students for a three-week service-learning trip to Ecuador in January of 2014 that is dedicated to sustainability, conservation, and social justice with the people of Intag, Ecuador.

When reflecting on his motivations for starting the course, Zorrilla said, “I have always felt this tension and lack of opportunity between what happens on campus and what happens in the real world. I wanted to link the world of hard-working community members with limited access to resources that we take for granted at Cornell, with students who then can gain immeasurably from the experience of interacting with real-life people who are doing practical work.”

To prepare for the trip to Ecuador, three teams of five students are set up to partner with community practitioners in order to gain experience in creating a deliverable that will further the community goals, which will enhance the student’s experiential learning skills. Combining both a practical component and an academic component will prepare the class well before arriving to Ecuador. Students interested in design will be assigned to a women’s handicraft cooperative called Mujeres y Medio Ambiente. Students interested in eco-agriculture will be paired with an organic farmers association, and students interested in conservation will be working with a local conservation NGO in Intag called Defensa y Conservación Ecológica.

A really important part of this class is that the community members see a benefit from this relationship,” Zorrilla said. “What I want to avoid is something that historically occurs a lot with service learning or international development where our benefit is too short-term, too top-down or too ill-informed to benefit the people we’re working with. Throughout the process, it has been really important for us to reflect on the processes and how difficult it is to do this sort of participatory work and do it right.”

Intag is an area in northwestern Ecuador, valued for its high biodiversity and strong community structure, with approximately 2,000 square kilometers of cloud forests and small farms. The Intag region also includes a rich deposit of copper, which has been targeted by transnational mining companies around the world.

Interest in the mining of Intag was also endorsed in the mid 1990s by the Project for Mining Development and Environmental Control (PRODEMINCA) and financed by the World Bank. The main objective of the PRODEMINCA project was to increase industrial mining in Ecuador by modifying Ecuador’s mining laws to make it much more pro-industry and producing maps of Ecuador’s mineral deposits so that mining companies could get more access to specific locations.

Local community members have sought to fight against the intervention of mining companies and the open-pit cooper mining of their land since 1995. During the over two decade long fight, community organizing resulted in two transnational mining companies, Mitsubishi Metals and Ascendant Copper, being rejected from opening new mines in the Intag region.

While some community efforts have been successful, it remains urgent to create alternative sources of income and model of development that seeks to make Intag a center for community-run sustainable development for its inhabitants.

“The story of Intag is everyone’s story. Allowing us to engage with a really unique moment in Intag’s history is hugely beneficial for Intag and hugely beneficial for us.”

- Martin Zorrilla

Jessica Barragan is a junior at Cornell University studying Government and Sociology.
Justice obstructed after massacre of peasants and police in Paraguay

by José Tomás Sánchez

What happened at Marina Kue? This question has become the rallying cry of civil society and international human rights organizations, who want a full investigation into the deaths of 11 peasants and six police officers on June 15, 2012 on Paraguayan state-owned land.

Many analysts say this massacre is yet another example of Paraguay’s long history of injustice around the land distribution in the country. Others add that the event was planned to create a political crisis for President Fernando Lugo, who in 2008 defeated the conservative Colorado Party after 61 years of rule. The tragedy of Marina Kue was used to force an unconstitutional impeachment against Lugo. For all of these reasons, the case deserves a full and proper investigation, which is far from reality now.

Here is what we know about what happened: More than 300 police officers in riot gear arrived on June 15, 2012 to expel a group of 60 landless farmers, including women, children and elders, who had occupied a piece of land months earlier.

The police had orders to use force against the peasants in case of resistance, as was done throughout the past decade on the land that politician and businessman Blas N. Riquelme claimed was his.

The peasants said, “We are not leaving until we see a document that proves this is Riquelme’s property.” They had proof that this land was Paraguayan state property meant for distribution but illegally taken by Riquelme.

The result of the June 15 police intervention was a shootout that left six officers and 11 civilians dead. The police surrounded the peasants, and no one seems to know how the shooting started. But what is clear is that it ended with multiple human rights abuses against civilians, including people who were visiting their relatives that day and were not involved in the occupation.

Organizations such as La Vía Campesina and Amnesty International have denounced cases of torture, brutal treatment of the wounded, illegal detentions and summary executions on the part of the police. Police manipulated peasants’ bodies to present them as “guerrilla soldiers” to the public and burned the peasants’ belongings.

The judiciary investigation that followed the tragedy was skewed toward the interests of the police and the landowner. The state prosecutor declared to the press that the peasants were the only ones responsible for the tragedy. He accused them of murder, criminal association and illegal invasion of private property. No officers were investigated.

He did not consider different hypothesis, such as the possibility that the officers were shot by high-powered military-grade weapons and not by the peasants’ hunting rifles. He did not open an investigation to determine what happened to the civilians, despite murder, torture and other abuses against them. Moreover, he did not contemplate the history of the land as a fundamental part of the case’s background or possible political interest in using the case to create a crisis.

Furthermore, by accusing all civilians present that day, the prosecutor annulled their conditions as witnesses. Only police officers were called to testify. The vague and incomplete narrative of the prosecutor was enough to put the peasants in jail.

Despite the rise of formal democracy in 1989, the process of Marina Kue has more similarities to a firing squad than to a 21st century trial. Democracy should be more than electoral procedures. It should be a regime with permanent equal rights for all citizens and a fair judiciary system.

It seems the truth may not be discovered in Paraguayan courts. Until the Marina Kue case is reopened in international courts, more awareness must be created about the violations of due process. True justice must be sought, not only for the peasants, police officers and their families, but also to advance agrarian reform and create real democratic institutions in Paraguay.

The history of land in Paraguay is rife with injustice. Since the Triple Alliance War of 1864 to 1870, the distribution of land has favored landowners, international capital and monoculture for export.

During the Alfredo Stroessner dictatorship of 1954 to 1989, 35 million acres were distributed illegally in the name of the agrarian reform to politicians, businesspeople, companies and the military. This produced a concentration of land and wealth for a limited few and the dispossession and poverty of the majority. Today 85 percent of the land in Paraguay is owned by 2 percent of the population.

Even though the Constitution of 1992 established agrarian reform as a vehicle of national development and a right of peasants, no government has seriously promoted its implementation. Therefore, land conflicts are persistent, and inequality is sustained by violence and institutions that favor landowners. From 1989 to 2005, 75 peasants were killed and two activists were disappeared in the struggle for the agrarian reform, according to a 2007 report of the Coordinación de Derechos Humanos de Paraguay. None of the cases were seriously investigated.
**Remembering 40 years: Chile to Ithaca**

by Bridget Tobin

September 11, 2013 marked the 40th Anniversary of one of the most devastating moments in the history of democratic processes. The 1973 coup d'état in Chile overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende and installed a military junta regime for the next 17 years.

Organizations like CUSLAR and Friends of Chile worked to uncover the truth about the coup in Chile, including research on U.S. government involvement in the violent overthrow. The groups also sponsored the relocation to Ithaca of Chilean students and families who had been imprisoned or were in danger for their support of the Allende government.

CUSLAR hosted students and community members to an event on the 40th anniversary of the coup. A booklet was presented on November 11 of that year, which includes interviews conducted with Joel Gajardo, Fran Barracough, and Ana Villa, and Carlos Gutiérrez. This work serves to commemorate those who stood for their country and its peoples, regardless of the great personal costs. This series of interviews with members of that Ithaca community who experienced firsthand the violent beginning of the military dictatorship in Chile also includes reflections on the “austerity” and neoliberal policies put in place in Chile that would later be implemented around the world. We aim to shed light on the unique and often painful history of much of the Chilean community in Ithaca, New York.

Joel Gajardo was a co-president of CUSLAR during the 1970s and now lives with his family in Nebraska. He was a professor at the Catholic University in Santiago, Chile in 1973 and a Minister with the World Council of Churches, spending his time in Chile and in Geneva, Switzerland before coming to the U.S. from Chile in 1974. He shared with us, a few of the details he remembered about the context of Chile before the coup and especially, he highlighted the gradual way in which average citizens like himself were more and more affected by the political events as tension built throughout the whole society.

Carlos Gutiérrez (far right), now of Ithaca, NY, moments before boarding a plane to the U.S. in 1976. He would be exiled from Chile for ten years for his political activities and beliefs during the time of the 1973 coup. Photo supplied.

“A law was passed that only the military can have arms. So the military go into different factories to ensure that the workers don’t have heavy equipment—there was an attempt to make sure that particularly big industry workers were under surveillance and control from arms. But the Armed Forces were overwhelming in their firing power so the opposition died very quickly. If a good was scarce, because the kind of people that control the market were holding that and only facilitated more and more tension in civil society to the point that it affected everyone.”

Carlos Gutiérrez was a trained technician who was detained for his political opinions in November of 1973 and came to the U.S. in 1976. He now works at the Tompkins County Worker’s Center, advocating for workers’ rights and continuing the struggle to spread solidarity.

“I arrived in the U.S. on August 10, 1976—that day sticks with you forever. The three years, that I was inside [prison in Chile] there were a lot of good things that came with it too. We never knew the consequences of a confrontation that could lead to a civil war, I more or less had an idea of it, but then experiencing the coup I realized that even thought people were organized socially, I would say politically, they were not strong enough to stop the military from doing what they did.”

Ana Villa grew up in Chile with her parents Fran and Solon Barracough. Her experience was quite unique since the family was American diplomats.

LEARN MORE!

Get a copy of the booklet called “40 Years: Chile to Ithaca, Remembering the Coup and Continuing Connections for Solidarity.” Look for it online soon at cuslar.org

“History is ours, and people make history. Workers of my country: I want to thank you for the loyalty that you always had. At this definitive moment, the last moment when I can address you, I wish you to take advantage of the lesson: foreign capital, imperialism, together with the reaction, created the climate in which the Armed Forces broke their tradition.”

-Chilean President Salvador Allende, below, as the Air Force bombed the Presidential Palace, Sept. 11, 1973.
CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: CORNELL FARMWORKER PROGRAM

Program puts students in relationship with farmworkers

by Jessica Barragan

The Cornell Farmworker Program is dedicated to improving the working and living conditions of farmworkers and their families.

Led by Mary Jo Dudly in the Department of Development Sociology, the program offers a paid summer internship that allows students to conduct research and education outreach to address the needs of the farmworker community in New York.

The internship puts students in close touch with people facing realities that may be drastically different than their own. Dudley noted that having undocumented status changes everything about how a farmworker goes about their day: “If you are undocumented, when you leave the house or the farm, you run the risk of being deported,” she said.

Student interns work on projects dealing with issues ranging from farmworker housing to provision of health services and work to improve workplace communication between the farmworkers and their employers.

Through this program, Cornell has been able to assess the farmworkers’ needs by providing on-farm workshops on the English language, emergency planning, chemical safety and career opportunities. Their outreach efforts have also included surveying the extent of use of farmworker services, examining farmworker contributions to their respective communities and addressing immigration and mental health concerns. Workshops give student interns the opportunity to combat many of the challenges with the hopes of giving the necessary background and guidance for farmworkers to understand the appropriate course of action to take in situations that may be unfamiliar to them.

“It is great for Cornell students to get off campus and familiarize themselves with the farmworker community. The success of the program comes from our interactions with farmworkers and how we take issues that are a concern for them and provide educational materials and activities that help address those concerns,” Dudley said.

Carmen Martinez, a Cornell senior, discussed her experience as a 2013 summer intern in the program. She first became educated about the condition of farmworkers through her involvement with student organizations Movimiento Estudiantil Chicoano/a de Aztlán (MECHA), Friends of Farmworkers and Immigrant Farmworker Initiative.

As a part-time summer intern, Martinez and other student interns conducted research through interviews and focus groups with the farmworkers. The main focus on the research was to determine what the challenges were that both the workers and employers had on the farm. Most of the problems, according to Martinez, were tied to communication and the need for more farmworkers to receive English language training.

Not only did students learn of the condition of the farmworker community and examine their perspective on labor issues, they also found that their immigration status was a significant issue, as most of the farmworkers were undocumented. With a majority of the undocumented workers coming from Guatemala and Mexico, Martinez and her team also found that many of the farmworkers had come to the United States in the hopes of finding work to send money back to their families in their home countries.

When reflecting on her experience as a summer intern for the program, Martinez said, “There is really no program like the Cornell Farmworker Program that gives students exposure as well as research opportunities, and provides as many targeted services to undocumented farmworkers.”

Estevan Ginsburg, another Cornell senior, described his internship experience as meaningful and enriching. “We taught English class and researched policies, but our main focus was interviewing workers and analyzing their responses to compile a guidebook for employers to use when working with Hispanic farmworkers. I learned so much from the people we interacted with, about their lives and struggles.”

The deadline to apply for the Cornell Farmworker Program for the summer of 2014 is March 3, 2014. For more information on the program, contact Mary Jo Dudley at farmworkers@cornell.edu.

Jessica Barragan is a junior at Cornell University studying Government and Sociology.

"If you are undocumented, when you leave the house or the farm, you run the risk of being deported."

- Mary Jo Dudley

Internship research topics may include:

Conducting research to assess farmworker needs.

Providing on-farm workshops including: English as a Second Language, Chemical Safety, and Emergency Planning.

Surveying farmworker services and their usage and examining perspectives on labor issues.

Canvassing immigration concerns and developing relevant extension materials.
América Latina muestra el camino de los derechos

Considerando estas necesidades, CUSLAR lanzó el Programa de Actores Comprometidos Paulo Freire en septiembre de 2013, como espacio de estudio colectivo y forma de conectarnos con organizaciones latinoamericanas que luchan por los derechos humanos.

Las prácticas relacionadas a los temas como el desarrollo justo, los presupuestos participativos, el derecho a la alimentación, la vivienda y la educación, están muy avanzadas en América Latina. Nos beneficia mucho, aprender sobre lo que ha funcionado en otros lugares y lo que no.

Como primera Actora Comprometida, Stronzake pasó un mes con CUSLAR, dando más de 25 presentaciones a grupos universitarios y comunitarios en Ithaca, Syracuse, New York City y Philadelphia. Su experticia en la soberanía alimentaria y la formación política fueron de interés especial.

Esperamos continuar los intercambios con el MST y La Vía Campesina a través del Programa Paulo Freire y con la red nacional, University of the Poor.

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Por Tim Shenk, Coordinador de CUSLAR

En el reciente Congreso sobre Democracia y Dictadura celebrado en Cornell University, Judite Stronzake, una dirigente del Movimiento Sin Tierra de Brazil, habló sobre la dictadura militar que sufrió el pueblo brasileño de 1964 a 1985. Además denunció la “nueva dictadura económica global” que ha llevado a una desigualdad sin precedentes en su país y el mundo.

‘La pobreza en medio de la abundancia’

Reconociendo los planteamientos de Stronzake, entendemos que es importante situar los debates actuales sobre la democracia y dictadura en el contexto de la economía global. La crisis de 2008 esclareció lo que el Reverendo Dr. Martin Luther King, hijo, llamaba, “la pobreza en medio de la abundancia”.

Mientras Wall Street y otros centros financieros del mundo han recuperado su fuerza, las tecnologías productivas y políticas públicas nos han llevado a una nueva realidad sin empleos en EE.UU. y otros países. De los limitados empleos que se han creado en EE.UU. desde 2010, más de la mitad son de sueldo precario, medio tiempo y temporal.

Saket Soni, el director del New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, denomina este tipo de trabajo precario, “el futuro del trabajo” en Estados Unidos. “En su tiempo, primero el granjero y luego el trabajador de fábrica fueron vistos como los típicos trabajadores norteamericanos”, dijo Soni, “Hoy es la cajera de Walmart y el jornalero migrante. Ya no están al margen -- estas personas subcontratadas por medio tiempo sin seguro de salud, son la guardia. Hacia allá va la economía estadounidense”.

Este gran cambio en el mercado laboral ha golpeado más fuerte a las personas más vulnerables. El 22 por ciento de niños y niñas en EE.UU. viven en la pobreza, y los recortes recientes al programa de subsidios alimentarios, o food stamps, afecta a 1 de cada 7 personas en el país.

Respuesta de CUSLAR: Programa Freire

Viendo las múltiples crisis de salud, vivienda, deuda y desempleo que ha generado este modelo económico, CUSLAR e instituciones amigas en todo el país hemos visto la necesidad de fortalecer nuestras relaciones con grupos e instituciones latinoamericanas, para aprender a fortalecer nuestras comunidades y organizaciones.

Esfuerzos globales de unión

Dijo Stronzake que “nos organizamos a nivel internacional porque comprendemos que ninguna comunidad sobrevive sola”. Los intercambios y cursos, muchos llevados a cabo en la Escuela Nacional Florestan Fernandes del MST, permite que el movimiento desarrolle un análisis en común y una unidad estratégica con organizaciones con sede en otros países.

Por ejemplo, en noviembre el MST, organizaciones amigas y moradores de las favelas de Rio de Janeiro recibieron a dos dirigentes de Abahlali baseMjondolo, una organización de más de 12 mil residentes de chozas que exige la vivienda digna en las grandes ciudades de Sudáfrica.

“Hemos venido a Brasil a aprender y compartir nuestras luchas porque todos los países están divididos entre pobres y ricos”, le dijo la dirigente sudafricana Bandile Mdalalose a un periodista en Río.
Se destacan luchas por la democracia en el Congreso Latinoamericano

por Antonio Henríquez García

¡Que viva la democracia! Este fue el grito de muchos que retumbó en los pueblos de América Latina luego del derrocamiento de los yugos de las infames dictaduras de las décadas de 1960, 70 y 80.

Nos encontramos en el año 2013 y desde el fin de los regímenes dictatoriales han pasado casi 30 años. “¡Por qué?” nos preguntamos, “debemos preocuparnos por una vieja página de la historia?”

Durante los días 27 y 28 septiembre del 2013, La Visión Latinoamericana, CUSLAR y Argentine and Uruguayan Friends at Cornell organizaron una conferencia para responder justamente esta pregunta. La conferencia reunió a ilustres figuras representativas de la lucha anti-dictatorial en América Latina, entre ellas la Presidenta de Asociación Civil Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Estela Barnes de Carlotto y una representante de la Coordinación Nacional del Movimiento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST) de Brasil, Judite Stronzake.

La conferencia también contó con el apoyo y presencia de la Embajadora de la República Argentina en Washington, Cecilia Nahón, y del Programa de Estudios Latinoamericanos de la Universidad Cornell.

“Mi mea culpa,” pronunció la señora Barnes de Carlotto en voz conmocionada recordando los bombardeos sobre la Plaza de Mayo en el año 1955, “es que si hubiese salido junto con el pueblo a repudiar esa dictadura, mi hija Laura estaría viva.”

Y fue así que su lucha comenzó, entre años de dictadura opresiva por parte del régimen militar de extrema derecha, la Asociación Civil Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo surgió no solo como un movimiento organizado de búsqueda por seres queridos que misteriosamente desaparecieron sin dejar rastro alguno, sino como parte de un movimiento de resistencia civil ante un yugo autoritario y violador de los derechos humanos.

Ya han pasado casi 30 años desde el derrocamiento de las últimas dictaduras militares en América Latina. El esfuerzo de Abuelas, como expresó la señora Buscarita Roa, quien junto a Barnes de Carlotto también asistió a la conferencia y relató su experiencia al encontrar a su nieto perdido, ha sido infalible. Hasta el día de hoy Abuelas ha logrado encontrar 109 nietos perdidos, el más reciente de los cuales fue hallado en agosto de este año. La organización se compromete a continuar su misión hasta encontrar al último nieto perdido.

Por su parte, la representante de la Coordinación Nacional del MST, Judite Stronzake, expresó que mientras la última dictadura militar en Brasil terminó en 1985, los trabajadores rurales han enfrentado una especie de dictadura permanente por parte de las corporaciones privadas. Estas, en su opinión, son culpables del acaparamiento de los recursos naturales que abastecen las necesidades básicas de la población campesina.

La lucha sigue. Las aportaciones de las señoras Barnes de Carlotto y Stronzake sin duda alguna han dejado claro que para entender la lucha actual, es preciso entender su origen e historia. Este responde nuestra pregunta inicial.

La Visión Latinoamericana fue fundada en el año 2012 como organización sin fines de lucro con el propósito de promover el conocimiento y entendimiento de la comunidad académica sobre las diversas realidades que enfrentan los pueblos de América Latina. Mientras que nuestra organización es ante todo, educativa y políticamente imparcial, La Visión Latinoamericana aprecia y comparte el espíritu de iniciativa de toda organización cuyo propósito es el mejoramiento social.

La Visión Latinoamericana le extiende un agradecimiento especial a los profesores de Cornell e Ithaca College que moderaron las mesas de discusión abierta realizadas el 28 de septiembre. Gracias a su contribución se realizaron debates cuya diversa gama de temas ampliaron el ámbito y alcance de la conferencia. Siete mesas de debate fueron relevantes a países desde el Cono Sur a Brasil, Centroamérica y el Caribe.

Luego de concluir una exitosa conferencia, La Visión Latinoamericana fija la mira en el porvenir y le extiende una invitación a todo aquél que se identifique con dicha misión a unirse a nuestro equipo de trabajo.
Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo comparten sobre 36 años de lucha por los derechos humanos

En su presentación de Estela Barnes de Carlotto y Buscarita Roa, la Embajadora Argentina Cecilia Nahón dijo de estas abuelas, “son dos ejemplos emblemáticos de las luchas por los derechos humanos en Argentina, la región y el mundo”.

Las Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo han sido nominadas seis veces por el Premio Nobel de la Paz.

Lo siguiente es el texto de su conferencia magistral compartida, que dio inicio al Congreso Latinoamericano sobre Democracia y Dictadura, celebrado en Cornell University el 27 y 28 de septiembre de 2013.

Estela Barnes de Carlotto

Muy buenas tardes, queridos amigos, muy felices están todas las abuelas, de estar en esta tan importante universidad.

Nos entusiasmó muchísimo el tema de democracia y dictadura porque es de interés de todo Latinoamérica. Y como todo está globalizado hoy en día, creo que también que es de interés del mundo.

Nosotros tuvimos una dictadura cívico militar desde del 24 de marzo de 1976 hasta el año 1983.

Pero para entender bien el panorama sociopolítico del Argentina, tenemos que recordar que desde de 1930 tuvimos una dictadura cívico militar en nuestro país. Quiere decir que las personas que tenemos nuestra edad -yo nací en 1930- crecimos y fuimos educadas en dictaduras.

La prensa monopólica que todavía hoy tenemos, desgraciadamente, era parte de la información y desinformación de estos hechos políticos.

Yo me recuerdo mi infancia, cuando tenía que ir a la escuela, pero la mañana, se escuchaba una marcha militar en la radio. No había televisión. Escuchamos el comunicado número uno y los militares en el poder desalojando el gobernante elegido por el voto constitucional.

Recuerdo que mi papá decía, entonces, no trabajar, y nosotros, los hijos, tampoco íbamos a la escuela. Y al día siguiente, como si nada, nuestra vida continuaba.

Por supuesto, había movimientos de protesta sobre todo, en los estudiantes, en las universidades, y en la clase obrera.

La dictadura siempre estaba apoyada por la clase rica, o sea la oligarquía, y por todos aquellos que tenían un interés personal. Los libros de historia estaban incompletos. Había páginas en blanco, porque esto no se contaba.

Hubo golpe cruento en el año 1955. Pasó la usurpación por bombardeo a la Plaza de Mayo, la plaza principal de nuestro Buenos Aires.

Murieron centenares de personas por estos bombardeos. Personas que iban a sus trabajos, unos niños que iban en un ómnibus escolar. Y al día siguiente no hubo protestas de las familias de estas víctimas.

Yo estaba de acuerdo con estas medidas ilegales, porque la educación que había recibido era para hacerme pensar que estaba bien, que no era ilegal.

Yo tenía 25 años. Tenía a mi primer hijo Laura en mis brazos, y festejé las muertes.

Esto lo digo porque mi mea culpa es que si hubiese salido junto con el pueblo a repudiar esa dictadura, mi hija Laura estaría viva. Eso es una reflexión para aquellos en cualquier país del mundo que justifiquen la muerte.

En 1976 Laura y mis tres hijos mayores eran parte de una lucha estudiantil.

Cuando comienza la represión de esta última dictadura, los padres en general teníamos terror y queríamos desalentar lo que hacían nuestros hijos. Por amor queríamos que no se repitiera la misma historia que habíamos vivido nosotras.

Nos preguntan a veces cómo las abuelas podemos estar 36 años en esta lucha. Estamos – estoy, porque Laura y sus 30 mil compañeros nos dieron un ejemplo de valor. Seguimos buscando respuestas para lo que hizo esa dictadura. Es un compromiso que hemos asumido para toda la vida.

Durante esa época se crearon en Argentina más de 350 centros clandestinos de detención. Allí ponían a los prisioneros de todas las edades y condiciones sociales. Allí eran torturados para sacarles información y luego asesinados y sus cuerpos desaparecidos.

Cuando entre las víctimas encontraban a una joven embarazada, se la dejaba vivir hasta que naciera su bebé en ese lugar.

Estas dos generaciones son las que estamos buscando las abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo. Nuestros hijos y nuestros nietos nacidos en cautiverio.

Tenemos la perseverancia por la necesidad de saber la verdad, tener memoria y poder obtener justicia.
Nacimos solas con miedo, peligro, desconocimiento. Nos fuimos encontrando, y formamos un grupo indestructible. Por esa unidad hemos logrado encontrar a 109 nietos.

Algunas todavía no hemos tenido la felicidad de encontrarlos, mientras otras sí los han podido abrazar y contarles sobre la verdadera historia.

Hay mucho más para contar, son 36 años. Pero estamos acá para compartir ideas de cómo conseguir la paz.

Por eso agradezco, en mi nombre y en nombre de todas las abuelas, el poder conocerles, mirarnos a los ojos, y saber que de acá van a salir seguramente, magníficas ideas.

Por eso voy a concluir con una frase muy cortita que nace en Argentina: Nunca más.

Gracias.

**Buscarita Roa**

Buenas tardes a todos y a todas, gracias por recibirnos en su casa.

Yo soy chilena, y hace 38 años que vivo en Argentina. Me ha tocado a vivir dos dictaduras, la de Chile y la de Argentina. Mi hijo era un estudiante y un participante político en Chile. Sufrió un accidente ferroviario a los 16 años. El tren a él le cortó las dos piernas.

Fue a Argentina para hacer un tratamiento de rehabilitación para ponerse piernas ortopédicas. En Argentina siguió militando en un centro de rehabilitación para personas incapacitadas y desgraciadamente también participó, bueno felizmente participó en política, pero desgraciadamente desapareció.

De esta fecha, el 28 de noviembre de 1978, estoy participando en la Asociación Cívica Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo, buscando los restos de él, de mi nuera, y buscando a mi nietita que se la habían llevado con ellos a los ocho meses de edad.

Sigo trabajando con las Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo acompañándolas, aunque yo encontré la mía cuando ella tenía 22 años, hace 13 años.

Yo tuve la suerte de poder encontrar a mi nieta. No todas las abuelas han tenido esta suerte, pero encontrar a los nietos es lo más hermoso que nos puede pasar en esta organización en la que estamos trabajando.

Para poder encontrar a los nietos, las abuelas tenemos un banco nacional de datos genéticos, donde tenemos la sangre de los familiares que quedamos vivos, para poder hacer la prueba de ADN de estos jóvenes, que ya no son niños.

Tenemos casi cuatro décadas buscando a los nietos. Hemos encontrado a 109 que ya son adultos y están felices por haber recuperado su verdadera identidad.

No es fácil para ellos recuperar la identidad. Porque se han criado con una familia que no les pertenecía. Fueron apropiados la mayoría por personas que pertenecían a las Fuerzas Armadas. Después de matar a sus padres, estos niños eran entregados o repartidos entre los militares para ser criados como hijos propios.

Por supuesto que eran adopciones ilegales. Ni siquiera eran adopciones, sino que eran robos de bebés.

Mi nieta fue criada con una familia de un coronel, que la sacaron del centro clandestino donde estaba con sus padres y se la llevaron a su casa para criarla como hija propia, cambiándole su verdadera identidad.
Buenas tardes a los organizadores de la conferencia, estudiantes, maestros, investigadores y activistas sociales.

Desde el MST y La Vía Campesina, es un honor el espacio para poder compartir nuestras experiencias, sociales, instituciones creadas o papel. La Constitución de 1988 preservó nuestras experiencias actuales, sobre un tema tan profundo y complejo para los pueblos y movimientos sociales de Nuestra América Latina y Caribe. ¡Muchas gracias por la invitación!

Nuestra actual democracia es un avance pero es insuficiente

En estos últimos tiempos, en estos últimos veinte años en especial, en nuestros países y en Brasil, lo que tenemos es una democracia representativa. Cada cuatro años tenemos la oportunidad de participar con nuestro voto. Después de 21 años de dictadura en Brasil, del 1964 hasta 1985, logramos una conquista de la clase trabajadora y de las organizaciones una apertura democrática.

Entonces tener un régimen democrático y representativo con los poderes legislativos, judiciales, ejecutivos con instituciones, reglas y la existencia de una constituyente son muy importante para el régimen democrático.

Mas comprendemos que es insuficiente. Nosotros votamos pero no hay otros mecanismos de tener una democracia más directa y participativa. Así la democracia que hay es insuficiente desde el punto de vista de participación social, donde es muy necesario uno sistema político el pueblo sea el soberano, abriendo caminos para atender las demandas de aspiraciones populares como educación gratuita y de calidad, transporte público de calidad, reformas agrarias – urbanas y tributarias, reestatización de las empresas privatizadas y la salud gratuita y de calidad.

En nuestra democracia, tenemos una Constitución, cuando la dictadura militar fue derrocada, en 1985, el movimiento de masas colocó en el orden del día la necesidad de nuevas instituciones para el Brasil.

A pesar de los avances en los derechos sociales, algunos quedarian solamente en papel. La Constitución de 1988 preservó muchas instituciones creadas o profundizadas por el régimen militar, como por ejemplo la policía militarizada y la manutención de la estructura agraria.

A pesar de esto, hay un artículo muy importante, el artículo 184, donde dice que toda la tierra tiene que cumplir su función social. La tierra que no la cumple, tiene que ser desapropiada y distribuida a los campesinos y campesinas sin tierra, quilombolas, y preservar los territorios indígenas. Es la democratización del acceso a la tierra.

Además, toda la tierra que emplea el trabajo esclavo o que está vinculado al narcotráfico, tiene que ser apropiada por el gobierno y también distribuida a los campesinos sin tierra.

Entonces desde el punto de vista democrático actual, hemos avanzado. Sin embargo, al mismo tiempo somos el país campeón del mundo en concentración de tierra. En Brasil el 1 por ciento de la población tiene el 46 por ciento de la tierras.

Es importante, la democracia que tenemos ahora. Mas, tenemos que crear mecanismos para que la sociedad pueda intervenir también desde el punto de vista constitucional con sus organizaciones y movimientos y que también tenemos que crear nuevos mecanismos para que la sociedad pueda decir qué queremos y qué no queremos para el presente y el futuro del país.

Un hecho concreto es que tiene que haber un modelo de democracia directa para que nuestra gente pueda decir si quiere o no quiere consumir 7 botellas de químicos tóxicos cada año.

Nadie nos consultó si queremos tragar todos los años, siete botellas de agua y comida con químicos. Somos obligados a consumirlo. Entonces ¿cuál es el grado de democracia que tenemos? Somos obligados a consumir agrotóxicos y alimentos transgénicos los días, alimentos basuras que solamente causan enfermedades y cáncer que no tienen remedio.

Así, las preguntas que tenemos que hacer hoy son, ¿Democracia para qué? ¿Democracia para quién? ¿Democracia para cuales grupos sociales? ¿Y cuál tipo de democracia queremos?

Hace 28 años acabamos la dictadura en Brasil. Hoy somos la sexta economía mundial. Pero somos el número 85 en el índice de desarrollo humano social.

Desde el punto de vista económico, Brasil va bien según la economía. Mas, desde el punto de vista del subdesarrollo humano, nuestro país está en la misma condición de muchos de los países menos desarrollados del mundo. Esto nos dice que hay una nueva dictadura que camina por las instituciones internacionales en el estado burgués. ¿Cómo percibimos esto? Leemos los acuerdos internacionales.

Judite Stronzake, representante de la Coordinación Nacional del Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) de Brasil, impartió la ponencia de cierre del Congreso Latinoamericano sobre Democracia y Dictadura, realizado en Cornell University el 27 y 28 de septiembre de 2013. A continuación sigue el texto de la ponencia, pronunciada originalmente en español.
no hay democracia’

Crisis mundial provoca explotación de riquezas naturales

Con la crisis mundial de capital financiero internacional hay una búsqueda de riqueza a las fuentes naturales. La tierra, el agua, la biodiversidad y los minerales. Todo esto apoyado en los acuerdos internacionales entre las grandes empresas, instituciones, gobiernos y estados.

Las comunidades campesinas e indígenas son las más afectadas de este modelo de producción que existe a nivel mundial. Entonces decimos que este es el tipo de dictadura actual que tenemos.

Hay una unión en los últimos 20 años entre las empresas transnacionales, el capital financiero internacional que son los banqueros y los propietarios que crean un nuevo modelo que amenaza a los campesinos. Se llama el agronegocio o el agribusiness.

¿Y las consecuencias de esto? Es lo que comemos —comidas patronadas y transgénicas.

En Brasil tenemos una cultura de comer arroz y frijoles todos los días. Están tratando de imponer otra cultura de comida que no es de nosotros, con el fast food. Esto lo conocen bien. Son los burgers, los restaurantes de McDonalds.

Hay un cambio también de semillas. El agronegocio trata de quitar las semillas nativas. Hay ahí una resistencia muy fuerte llevada por los movimientos sociales de mantener y preservar las semillas en las comunidades.

Es el mismo modelo con el agua. Hay mucha privatización, mucho intento de privatizar el agua. Esto también es parte del nuevo modelo de dictadura que tenemos. Nuestras comunidades dicen que el agua es un bien común. No es de las empresas.

Un litro de agua cuesta 4 reais, es decir 2 dólares. Una botella de gasolina es más barata que una botella de agua.

Ellos han creado sus propias crisis. Las han producido para atacar a los campesinos y las indígenas para tomar sus recursos naturales y la minería. ¿Y qué producen? Las empresas transnacionales, el capital financiero internacional y el agronegocio quieren producir un campo sin campesinos.

Ya lo han logrado en Europa. En muchos países en Europa sólo el 1 por ciento de la población vive en el campo.

Los agronegocios producen en monocultivos, grandes cantidades de tierras de buena calidad para la producción de alimentos. Producen caña, soya, naranja, maíz y eucalipto. Todo es para la exportación.

A consecuencia, es que hay tanta hambre en el mundo, que cada cinco minutos hay un niño que muere de hambre en el mundo, confirmó el especialista de las Naciones Unidas, Jean Ziegler, “el hambre en el mundo es igual al crimen organizado”.

Otro modelo actual de dictadura es los medios de comunicación masivos que se unen a las empresas transnacionales, el sector banquero y el agronegocio para que la gente no perciba la realidad, tornan las personas ajenas de la vida concreta, creando un mundo de consumismo, individualismo y competencias.

Necesitamos mecanismos de participación

Para terminar, quiero compartir un poco de nuestra comprensión de la democracia. Una idea que planteamos es que sin reforma agraria no hay democracia.

Debemos democratizar el acceso a la tierra. La mayoría de los dueños de las grandes extensiones de tierras de Brasil viene de las 500 empresas transnacionales más grandes del mundo, que producen comidas transgénicas. Entendemos que si no hay una democratización de la tierra, no hay una profundización de la democracia. Creemos hoy en la Reforma Agraria popular, para toda la sociedad brasileña.

Otra propuesta de democracia es que cada comunidad y cada pueblo deben tener el derecho de decidir qué come y cómo come. No debe haber una imposición de las empresas transnacionales y sus comidas transgénicas. Queremos la democracia con soberanía alimentaria.

Una tercera propuesta es la democratización de acceso al conocimiento y a las universidades. Exigimos el acceso a la educación gratuita y de calidad para el público.

Y también acceso al transporte público y de calidad y la salud.

Hay unas personas en mi país que nunca han visto a un médico. Ahora hace un mes el gobierno de Brasil hizo un convenio con Cuba, y llegaron 6,000 médicos cubanos a Brasil para trabajar en comunidades campesinas e indígenas, localidades más distantes de los grandes centros urbanos. ¡Bienvenidos los médicos cubanos a Brasil!

Al mismo tiempo tenemos que crear más universidades de medicina para que los trabajadores que les gustaría practicar la medicina, puedan ser médicos.

La democracia también debe consistir de trabajo con sueños dignos para que los trabajadores podamos vivir con dignidad. La gente debe tener acceso al transporte y vivienda, deporte y cultura. Se nos tiene que cumplir el derecho a la fiesta, la música, el arte y la diversión.

Necesitamos crear mecanismos directos de participación a la sociedad para que no nos quedemos esperando cada cuatro años para votar, en la esperanza que apenas el gesto de lo voto hace cambios estructurales en el país.

Un problema que tenemos en nuestro continente es que la democracia no debe significar la intervención de países en otros países. Hay actualmente una intervención militar en Haití, por la MINUSTAH. Los haitianos y haitianas necesitan su soberanía y no ejército. Y hay bases militares como por ejemplo en Colombia siete nuevas bases militares estadounidenses y hay en otros países de América Latina y Caribe. También la democracia debe significar que los movimientos sociales puedan hacer manifestaciones en cualquier país sin ser considerados terroristas. Es el derecho de ir y venir y la libertad de opinión.

Estas formas de dictadura y dominación son las experiencias de la gente sin tierra, los campesinos, indígenas y afrodescendientes en mi país. Son tiempos de duras luchas por derechos humanos elementales.

Tenemos que empujar el gobierno para resistir las demandas de las empresas. Es una lucha permanente. Debemos mantenernos en las calles para que el gobierno trabaje por el beneficio de la clase trabajadora y no por los intereses de las grandes corporaciones y del agronegocio.

¡Muchas gracias!
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CUSLAR and Global Health develop summer program in Dominican Republic

CUSLAR will be an integral partner in the Cornell University Global Health Program’s new eight-week study program in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic for Cornell undergraduates starting in June 2014. The program will include coursework at la Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, internships at a medical clinic and community justice center and homestays in the North Santo Domingo neighborhood of Simón Bolívar. Based on a human rights framework, the program will highlight health inequalities as they relate to gender, nationality and children’s rights.

CUSLAR Coordinator Tim Shenk, who spent five years in the Dominican Republic working with local leaders and scholars on related subjects, brings key expertise to the new program in language ability, cultural competency and Latin American and Caribbean history.

CUSLAR student intern Bridget Tobin compiled a book of testimonies and memories from Chileans who resettled in Ithaca, New York with the assistance of CUSLAR members and the religious coalition “Friends of Chile” in the 1970s after the U.S.-backed coup upset the democratic process in Chile.

The book, “40 Years: Chile to Ithaca, Remembering the Coup and Continuing Connections for Solidarity” was presented in draft form as part of the introduction to a presentation on “Chile, Metaphor and Memory” by Oberlin College professor Steve Volk at Ithaca College on November 11, sponsored by Latin American Studies.

CUSLAR Coordinator Tim Shenk, who spent five years in the Dominican Republic working with local leaders and scholars on related subjects, brings key expertise to the new program in language ability, cultural competency and Latin American and Caribbean history.

The text brings the historical events of 1973 Chile home with first-person testimonies from those who suffered through the transition to military dictatorship and then were able to gain entrance to the U.S. and settle in Ithaca. Tobin, a senior Politics major at Ithaca College, spent the summer and fall researching in the Cornell archives and interviewing several key members of the Ithaca community as part of the project.

See Tobin’s article, including interview excerpts, on page 16.

Film illuminates root causes of migration

Eduardo López, co-director of the award-winning documentary Harvest of Empire, toured upstate New York in September 2013 hosted by CUSLAR, discussing the root causes of Latino migration to the U.S. at Cornell University, Ithaca College, Elmira College, Nazareth College, St. John Fisher and Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

López noted that the greatest challenge was revealing the true story of Latinos in the U.S.: “We needed to tell difficult truths about our country but we wanted to do it in a way that would not be perceived as anti-U.S.,” López said. “Both producer Wendy Thompson and I are very proud of being U.S. citizens, but we also think it is very important to tell our stories to our fellow citizens.”

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