



CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

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POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

A NATIONAL CALL FOR MORAL REVIVAL

takes on racism, poverty, militarism & ecological devastation



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The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival

National moral effort combats poverty, racism



Photo: @RevDrBarber

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, at left, and more than a hundred others attempted unsuccessfully to deliver an open letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell at the Capitol Building in Washington, DC on December 4.

The letter called for the national government to guarantee the rights of those harmed by systemic racism, poverty, militarism and the war economy, and ecological devastation.

by Tim Shenk, editor

The **Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival** launched in Washington, DC on December 4, on the 50th anniversary of the day that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others came together "to demand that the government address itself to the problem of poverty."

The new Poor People's Campaign is no simple commemoration of the work for which Dr. King was assassinated. Diverse national leadership led by clergy and the organized poor themselves is planning massive nonviolent civil disobedience in 25-30 state capitals and Washington, DC for May and June.

The goals? To call attention to the deepening crisis that is ongoing for the nearly one in two Americans who are poor or low-income, and to connect the roots of poverty to the roots of racism, militarism and ecological devastation.

At CUSLAR it is our mission to promote justice and mutual understanding in U.S.-Latin American relations. Generations of CUSLAR members have seen and felt in Latin America the repressive acts of the U.S. government, what Dr. King called "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world." This has driven us to call our government to account when it has failed to promote or even allow other nations their right to make decisions that affect their lives.

In addition to advocacy abroad, Dr. King challenged us to get our own collective house in order. His last effort was to build a Poor People's Campaign. "There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose," he told his staff in 1967. "If they can be helped to take action together," Dr. King said, "they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life."



Abandonment in the midst of abundance

The new and unsettling force King called for has been put in motion 50 years later. Poor people from around the U.S. are testifying to conditions of abandonment in the midst of abundance in the world's richest country.

Mashayla Buckmaster from Grays Harbor County, Washington traveled nearly 3,000 miles to the nation's capital on December 4 to challenge the false belief that it is people's own fault if they find themselves poor or homeless.

"I wasn't homeless because I'm stupid or lazy," she said. "I was homeless because our county has no problem with pregnant mothers being homeless in the winter, while just two hours away in Seattle, the CEOs of Microsoft and Amazon have made themselves the richest individuals on the planet."

Residents of Flint, Michigan, still have toxic lead levels in their water more than two years after this public health disaster was brought to national attention. Claire McClinton of the Flint Democracy Defense League expressed her outrage about the fact that 4 million U.S. families don't have access to clean water.

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CUSLAR

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Cover art: Tim Shenk.



CUSLAR is a Cornell University-based organization, founded in 1965, which seeks to promote a greater understanding of Latin America and the Caribbean. CUSLAR members are a diverse group of people united in our concern about the role of the United States in the social, political and economic affairs of the region. CUSLAR supports the right of the people of Latin America to self-determination and control over decisions that affect their lives and communities.

CUSLAR is a project partner of the Center for Transformative Action.

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Photo: Joe Paperone

Muslim leader Sahar Alsahlani, at the pulpit, along with Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell and Rev. Horace Sanders, gave an interfaith prayer at the Binghamton, NY mass meeting of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.

Faith leaders around the country are speaking out from pulpits and at rallies, saying that racism, poverty, hunger and homelessness are the true moral issues.

"Woe to those who make unjust laws, deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless."
Isaiah 10:1-2.

"You can go to the gas station and fill up your car with lead-free gas," she said. "You can go to the hardware store and get a gallon of lead-free paint. But you can't go home and turn on your faucet and get a glass of lead-free water?"

The campaign comes to Binghamton, New York

At a Poor People's Campaign mass meeting in Binghamton, NY in October, Tioga County, NY resident Jackie Bogart reported having to feed her family from dumpsters for weeks while she had no income, and being told by a county agency that she had to drop out of college to take a minimum-wage job.

At the same event, Bobby Black spoke about race and class discrimination in the prison system. Many poor people, predominantly black and brown, accept a plea bargain even if they did nothing wrong, if they can't come up with the cash to get out on bail. For many, he said, staying in jail even a few days means risking losing their job, their home and even their children.

Hunger, poor access to water, state repression and other symptoms of an unequal and unjust system are the sorts of things

"There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life."

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

CUSLAR members have denounced in Latin America for decades, especially in cases where the U.S. military and global corporate interests have been involved. Today those problems are becoming more rampant in the U.S. as our hard-won social safety net unravels.

Fifty years after Dr. King's assassination, CUSLAR is proud to be part of the new Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, led by co-chairs Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II of North Carolina and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis of New York City's Kairos Center.

We think this campaign is our best shot at taking on poverty, systemic racism, ecological devastation --

militarism and together, not as separate competing lobbying issues. If we're serious about our mission of justice in the hemisphere, it makes sense to

set our sights at least in part here at home, on the nerve center and the enforcement arm of global capital.

In this edition of the CUSLAR Newsletter, you'll find excerpts from local Poor People's Campaign events as well as students who have shown courage and vulnerability to share their own struggles with poverty and the immigration system.

We also highlight the ongoing crisis in Puerto Rico, indigenous struggles and the 2018 elections in Mexico, student reflections from the Cornell-CUSLAR Global Health Program in the Dominican Republic and a book review on the U.S.-backed coup in Guatemala.

With our stories, our songs and our feet, we can win the battle for the soul of this nation.

I hope you'll join CUSLAR in supporting and participating in the Poor People's Campaign's 40 days of massive nonviolent civil disobedience starting on Mother's Day 2018.

READ MORE!

CUSLAR was an early endorser of the campaign in 2015, two years before its December 4 launch. Find articles related to the development of the Poor People's Campaign in these CUSLAR Newsletters at cuslar.org under the Resources tab.

Winter 2015-16: A Kairos Moment: Global unity through the struggle against poverty
Summer/Fall 2016: The global significance of America's Heartland
Summer/Fall 2017: Baptist, de la Cruz discuss economic crisis, need for Poor People's Campaign

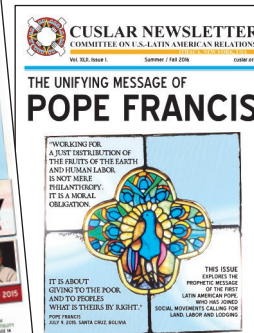
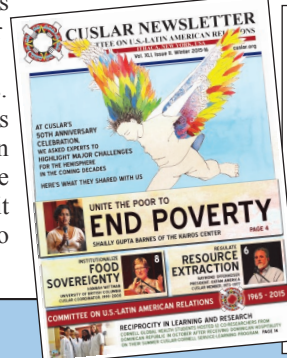


Photo: Brenda Kenneally



Panel discussion with social movement leaders: Addressing race and class divides

On October 18, the Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State hosted the 2017 Faith for a Fair New York conference at the United Presbyterian Church in Binghamton, NY. Among the workshops was a panel discussion with social movement leaders and scholars Willie Baptist, Barbara Smith and John Wessel-McCoy, moderated by Manolo de los Santos, pictured at left.

Rev. Emily McNeill prefaced the event by saying, "We have to spend some real time talking about race in this country, and about organizing across race and taking racism and white supremacy seriously."

We've printed an excerpt of the panel here. Find the full transcript at cuslar.org/ppc.

Manolo de los Santos: As we build the unity of our people, which is essential to this struggle, we cannot forget to talk about race. But I don't like talking about race without talking about my class, because I know where I come from.

I am an immigrant. My family was forced to migrate from the Dominican Republic to the U.S. We sometimes forget the connections between what the U.S. does to poor people in its own country and what it does to poor people all over the world. My family was forced to migrate: poor people from the Dominican Republic forced to be poor people in the United States.

The only white people I knew growing up were the cops, social workers and teachers, who we all considered enemies of the working people, because they were never on our side. But these times require us to look

again at the picture. It's comfortable for me to say that I'm black and Latino. Yet it's very uncomfortable to say that I'm black, Latino and poor in this country. It bothers people.

And the more I see why it bothers people, the more I'm interested in hanging out with other poor people. This unity we're building here today is a unity that actually requires us to look in our faces, look at difference, understand where difference comes from, who imposes it, who started it, and why it's functioning.

We are blessed to have here today a panel of fighters who are thinkers and thinkers who are fighters. Today we want to look at the history of identity politics in the United States. I want to introduce first of all our dear sister, fighter, thinker, Barbara Smith.

Barbara Smith: Hello, everyone. I was asked to speak about identity politics and the history of the Combahee River Collective. How many people have heard about intersectionality? Today I'm going to tell you where intersectionality actually came from.

The Combahee River Collective was a small group of black feminists. We came together in the mid 1970s in Boston, to do black feminist organizing at a time when even the white women's movement, was not mainstream or was not that well accepted. But certainly, organizing this -- and many of us were also lesbians -- we were *persona non grata*. We were marginalized, demonized, vilified, you name it. But we persisted.

At the **Poor People's Campaign** Mass Meeting on October 17 in Binghamton, NY, four speakers addressed aspects of what the campaign has named as the "four evils": **systemic racism, poverty, militarism and ecological devastation.**

The blue boxes on the following pages contain excerpts of the **testimonies** of Elizabeth James, Matt Howard, Jackie Bogart and Bobby Black from that night. *Elizabeth James is at right with her children.*

Elizabeth James

I am a 28-year-old mother of three from Schenectady. Me and my fiancé both work fast food. I am a shift leader making \$11

an hour, and he is a crew member making \$10.75 an hour. It is very hard to support our children and take care of bills. When I was four or five months pregnant, the doctor took me out of work. My fiancé was having trouble finding a job, so we were both out of work.

We went to the Department of Social Services. They told me they couldn't help us because he's able to work. He was able to get a job at Taco Bell and they paid

part of our rent. But then they cut our food stamps way down. I live in a three-bedroom apartment. But nowadays, I can't afford it. I have to have a room to rent, so I have to make my living room into a nursery and bedroom. Their playground is my dining room.

All I do is work. We shouldn't have to worry about food making it to the end of the month. I can't afford daycare, so me and my fiancé have to work separate shifts so we can have at least have a little time with our kids.

We need to keep fighting and telling our story to make our society livable without worrying if our children will be ok.



Photo: Brenda Kenneally

We named ourselves the Combahee River Collective after the river in South Carolina. Harriet Tubman was a scout with the Union Army during the Civil War, and she planned and led the only military action in U.S. history, probably up until even now, that was planned and led by a woman. It was an action that freed over 750 enslaved Africans.

In 1977 we wrote the Combahee River Collective Statement, and that statement is still read, taught, talked about and used. It was in the statement that the term "identity politics" first appeared, as far as we know. There were three co-authors of the Combahee River Collective Statement: my sister Beverly Smith, Demita Frazier and me.

I'll read the section of the statement that talks about identity politics.

This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression. In the case of Black women this is a particularly repugnant, dangerous, threatening, and therefore revolutionary concept because it is obvious from looking at all the political movements that have preceded us that anyone is more worthy of liberation than ourselves. We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough.

Now the reason we asserted that was because we were writing this in the context of black power or black nationalism. This was a legacy of the politics of the civil rights movement, and although black women were central to the success of the movement, we got very little credit. During this period of black nationalism going into the late '60s and early '70s, black women's roles were more proscribed and constricted.

What we meant by 'identity politics' was not to be exclusionary. We believed in coalition and thought it was important to work across our differences.

- Barbara Smith

Kwame Ture, whose birth name was Stokely Carmichael, was asked, "What is the position of the black woman in the political black movement?"

His response was, "The position of the black woman is to be prone." Now he actually meant supine. But either way you're on the ground, right?

The reason we asserted that identity politics were so important was because we thought it was critical for us as black women and women of color to define a political agenda based upon our actual experiences -- not just being female, that is, female and white, or being black and having no gender -- we thought it was important to bring all of that to the table.

One of the things that made the Combahee River Collective unique was that we had a lot of experience before we began to build our version of black feminism. We had been involved in the movement to end the war in Vietnam, in the Panthers, in the Civil Rights struggle, in student organizing.

What we meant by "identity politics" was not to be exclusionary. We believe in coalition. We were committed to coalition, and we actually worked in coalition with various kinds of people in Boston during that period. Keep in mind, that period in Boston history was a period of racial warfare, because that was during the school busing crisis of the 1970s. Court ordered, school segregation. Yet we thought it was important to work across our differences. So the way identity politics is used now is very different than what we actually intended.

The way it is being used now has been reduced, and the right wing has also taken to defining it, too. What we meant was

When they tell you we don't have any money, you can tell them they are lying to your face.

They have incredible amounts of money, but they use it for the wrong reasons. Why do we spend such a vast amount of money on the military? The word I often hear is security.

These wars have made our world devastatingly more insecure. Our government has sold us a false bill of goods.



Panelist Barbara Smith.

that it was legitimate for us as women of African heritage living in the United States, for us to define and create a political theory and practice, a political agenda, that would address the situations and the realities that we faced as black women and women of color.

What has happened with identity politics is that people see it as, "if you're not just like me, if you don't have the same experiences that I do, then I don't want anything to do with you and if you say something that I find oppositional then we have nothing to talk about further." It's being used to beat people up both ways.

Willie Baptist: I came of age out of the ghetto uprisings of the late 1960s. I was raised in Watts, California. On August 11, 1965, some 60,000 people hit the streets in violent protest against the conditions that existed in the black ghettos. Over the course of the last half of the '60s, somewhere in the area of 300 cities went up in flames and outrage. It has been called the most violent social upheaval since the Civil War. What developed out of that was an all-class, all-

Matt Howard

I served in the Marine Corps from 2001 to 2006. I'm here to talk about the war economy.

Politicians have been sending young men and women off to wars. Their children aren't the ones who have to fight. They don't dread a uniformed soldier walking up their driveway with devastating news. They have no stake. They sign off on budgets that distribute over 50 percent of our tax dollars -- more than \$680 billion -- to war making.

Who benefits? Corporations whose stocks rise every time we launch a new missile strike. Politicians who vie for defense contractor money to fuel their campaigns.

The Pentagon itself, which has top brass rotating through a revolving door to the board of directors of defense companies. A long line of presidents. We have the power to reclaim these resources. If we can act in unison, this war economy can shift into an economy that heals and regenerates our communities and the planet.



Photo: Brenda Kenneally

Panelist John Wessel-McCoy.

white law-and-order movement. Alongside of that was the black power movement. I came out of the black power movement.

I was so black nationalist that I didn't wear white underwear. I didn't like white folks. Watts, California was the most impoverished community in the state. I thought for a long time, like Manolo said, that white people had money. That they were rich, because all I knew were white folks on TV and the police. All white folks looked like they had some money. I thought that was true until I met John, and I found out that was a damn lie.

Over time I began to appreciate the problem of race and class. A lot of the mistakes I've made over the years -- and I've been involved for over 50 years in poor communities -- have had to do with race and class. This question of race and class is pivotal, and if we don't address it, we won't be successful. Society has maintained control through the mechanisms of race and other differences such as gender and other inequalities.

Malcolm X once stated, "Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research." A historical perspective is very important if we are to solve these problems.

If we study the ruling classes in history, they have never, never, exploited and oppressed equally. There's always a disproportion. There's always an isolation of one section of the oppressed and exploited as

a way of controlling the other section.

The other thing is that the ruling class has always represented a minority in society. The 1 percent. How is it that 1 percent has control of 99 percent? They've done it by emphasizing our differences and obscuring what we have in common. Our differences are very important, because we bring different things to different problems, which can contribute to a struggle moving forward if we understand our differences in relation to what we have in common.

We're living in a period where that all-white unity, based on the isolation and attack on another section of society, is being threatened by this economic crisis that they say was over in 2009 but is still here. People are getting jobs, but they're like slave jobs. Under slavery, everybody had a job.

I just want to stress that this problem of class and race is a very complicated one. It's one that we have to study, we have to learn from, and we have to understand who benefits from our division and the way they have of controlling us.

These are questions we should discuss, learn from each other and to go forward.

John Wessel-McCoy:

Before I got into this work with Willie and others at the Poverty Initiative at the Kairos Center, I was a union organizer. I organized parking

was enough for my kids to eat. I attended college in my early 20's.

That soon ended when I was forced by Social Services to make a choice between full-time college or a full-time minimum wage job.

I reluctantly got that job, and dropped out of college. About a year and a half ago, I was asked to join a Speaker's Bureau. I went. I learned a lot at these classes, and was encouraged to tell my life's story. Not only was this like therapy

attendants in Washington D.C., home healthcare workers in Chicago and childcare providers in New York City.

So my entry into this work was through organized labor, and the reason why I went that direction was because of what was going on in my hometown when I was in high school in the '90s. I grew up just outside of Decatur, Illinois. Decatur is a small industrial city and has a lot in common with cities you find across Illinois where the Rust Belt comes together with the Corn Belt.

When I was in high school, the workers at three of the four big factories were on strike at the same time. In the case of Staley, Tate

and Lyle, the workers were locked out for three years. Some people don't know what a three-year lockout means. It tears families apart. It was a war zone. That was actually how people described it then. Tear gas, beatings on the picket line, and it's not a very big town. Everyone had people on both sides of the fight.

It was also one these towns where for a couple of generations -- it was true, in particular for the white working class -- that you could graduate from high school and go to work at

I hear people saying, 'we have to break out of our silos.' The Poor People's Campaign could provide a way of building something that could actually transform, beyond groups fighting on separate fronts.

- John Wessel-McCoy

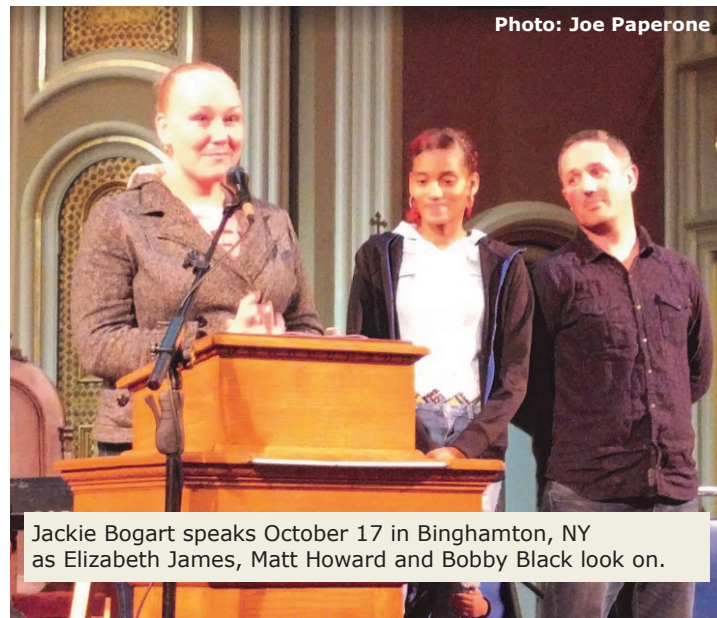


Photo: Joe Paperone

Jackie Bogart speaks October 17 in Binghamton, NY as Elizabeth James, Matt Howard and Bobby Black look on.

Jackie Bogart

I have always lived in poverty. My youngest memory is of when I was two years old, and my mother had to place me in foster care.

I remember the doll she gave me as she was leaving, it was a little baby doll with blonde hair and a blue dress. I have four children now, two of them are grown-ups. But they too, have had a hard life and know the realities of being poor.

Several years ago, we had no income and ate food from a dumpster for several weeks. I have had to skip meals to make sure there

for me, but people actually wanted to hear it. I am now a part of the conversations. It turns out that there are people who are working to help people like me. And now I have the opportunity to sit at the table and contribute my expertise as a person with lived experience in poverty. It is my responsibility, and my right.

Caterpillar or Staley or EDM or Bridgestone/Firestone, and you could get a job that made it possible for you to buy a house, a truck, and a bass boat if you wanted. Everyone needed a bass boat. That was part of the culture there.

When I was in high school that was the beginning of the end. Things have declined a great deal, and it was always twice as much of what was bad, and half as much of what was good, for black folks in Decatur.

But also, you have white folks, and members of my family, who have been incarcerated. I've got members of my family who have fallen prey to opioid addiction. I've got members of my family who have been laid off and struggle making ends meet. My family can be won over. I'm not running away from it. I love them, and I see them hurting.

And so there's a dynamic, which I think has been brought into such sharp relief over these past couple years: this idea of a notorious, terrible white working class that's out there voting against their self-interest. It's true, there are elements of that out there, but most of what I see when I go back to my hometown is people who are disorganized, disconnected, the vast majority, and hurting.

During this moment of real crisis, where there's danger and opportunity, we have to figure this out. How to unite? Not to disregard the differences, not to disregard the disproportionality of oppression, but also, this is the direction our entire country is going if we don't do something about it.

As I go around the country, I hear people saying, "we have to break out of our silos." So I think the Poor People's Campaign could provide an element to answering this question of building something that could actually transform, beyond a bunch of small groups fighting on separate fronts.

An interview with Willie Baptist:

Why we need a Poor People's Campaign

CUSLAR student Daniella Hobbs sat down with Willie Baptist when he visited Ithaca College in April. Here is an excerpt of what they discussed. The full interview is available at vimeo.com/cuslar.

Willie Baptist: Because of the crisis of our society, the way the economy is shaped, the poor has come to embody all of the major social ills: the housing problem, problems with our environment, the problems with healthcare, the racial questions, the gender questions, the question of who dies in war.

By uniting the poor, across color lines and every line of division, it allows us to connect those issues and to become a rallying point for all of those being hit by these different issues. The Poor People's Campaign helps break down this misconception of problems that sees them as separate. They're all are a manifestation of a system where a very few benefit from the suffering of so many is not just a result of policy. The very way that the system is constructed, it produces poverty.

Rev. Dr. King brought this out before he died. He said, "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that the very edifice that produces the beggar needs restructuring." Well, this structure, or this edifice, not only produces the beggars, it produces billionaires, and the billionaires proceed to maintain the system that they benefit from. On the other hand, the poor is forced into a position to kill the system before the system kills them.

People tend to think the Poor People's Campaign is just about poor people. They see poor people only as a charity case or criminal element, but what analysis has shown is that the position of the poor is only anticipating the position of increasing segments of the population. I might be poor today but you can become



poor tomorrow. I might be homeless today but you can be homeless if you have a healthcare crisis or you lose your job.

So this is not about how are we going to help those people over there, and we're going to feel sorry for those people over there. This is about your family, your future, all of our families and all of our futures.

One of the elements of this Poor People's Campaign, which is absolutely critical, is to show the inseparable, interdependent relationship of the poor, the poor of color with poor whites. One of the things that really distinguishes our process, that there is no way you can really develop in American thinking a kind of consciousness of capitalism as a class society if only the poor of color moved.

Because of our mindset, it's going to be interpreted separately as a color question, but once you involve the poor whites in the process you see the whole problem. You just don't see the leaf of it, or the branch of it, you actually see the whole root of the problem. It's not a problem that is just about oppressed races or genders, it's a society that is divided into classes.

Bobby Black

Here in Broome County, citizens who are predominately black and brown are incarcerated

on the basis that they are poor. Often failing to come up with bail, men and women remain behind bars.

While incarcerated for only a few days, people risk losing their housing, employment, and their children. Faced with this potential, many people will sign plea agreements to lessen trumped up charges

subjecting them to permanent legal discrimination.

I myself gave into the pressure of a plea deal. The Broome County Sheriff's Correctional Facility, our local jail, has noted that over 80 percent of its inmates cannot afford bail.

On any given day, our friends are being stripped of their dignity, of their fundamental rights. Our counties would rather spend millions of dollars to expand jails instead of releasing more low-level offenders. Just in the past several years,

seven people have died in the custody of Broome County.

It is important to note that the primary cause of death for these people is incarceration. These men and women would still be with us today if not incarcerated. The best way to keep people from dying while incarcerated is to keep them out of jail in the first place. We must do everything in our power to protect the most marginalized peoples of our communities. That means abolishing cash bail all together.



Poverty

An obstacle for the United States and the world

by Evelyn Sanchez

During hot summer days, my sister and I would place our hands against the floor of our aging apartment on Long Island to allow ants to crawl onto our hands. We would watch them as they moved along our arms with no definitive trail.

During several holiday seasons, my family received gifts and food from our schools and local organizations. One year, in the days leading up to Thanksgiving, the bell rang. My mother opened the door to find a turkey and a box with clothes and toys. As she looked around, she caught a glimpse of a police car driving off. We opened the box and unpacked it with excitement.

Despite these experiences, I wasn't aware I lived in poverty.

My parents had grown up in poverty amidst the civil war in El Salvador. At a young age, they both had to leave school in order to work and feed themselves. Their

upbringing drove their determination to provide my sister and me with a better life. My father worked as a courier between El Salvador and the U.S. He would also spend time in the United States working as a farmworker in Florida and as a cook in Long Island. Then one day when I was two, he was robbed at gunpoint. A month after that, they were told I needed two open heart surgeries in order to survive. This, combined with greater opportunities available in the U.S. drove my mother to bring my sister and me to the U.S.

After a month-long journey, we made it to the United States and a week later to Long Island where my father was. My mother and father worked in a factory during the day, and my father also worked as a janitor during the evenings.

Since we had come without documents and were caught, we had to check in at immigration court every three months. We were on the path to being deported when



The author, center, with her mother and older sister in El Salvador, before making the journey to Long Island, New York for her life-saving surgery. Photo provided.

4 in 5
people in the U.S. will experience economic hardship by the time they are 60 years old.

the LIFE Act was passed in 2000, allowing us to apply for residency. Then in 2001, El Salvador was struck by a 7.6 magnitude earthquake, making the country unsafe to return and thus, designated for Temporary Protection Status by Congress. This status granted us protection until my sister and I were able to become residents, and then citizens through our father. My mother has also gained her citizenship since then.

The years went by and my mother had my younger sister. She began to have health issues and had to care for us, so she left her job. My dad's two jobs were our only source of income. Seven years later my mom was diagnosed with cancer on the day she gave birth to our youngest sister. My father took some time off work in order to take her to chemotherapy two to three times per week, and to care for my little sister.

During this time, financial hardship was compounded by emotional hardship. We made ends meet only because of the money, food, clothes and prayers we received from friends and our church.

Months after returning to work, my father was laid off. My parents became overwhelmed by the expenses. Despite working, their income had always been

below the poverty line. Though they did not want to be seen as needy, the financial stress drove them to apply for food stamps. These helped us for several years.

My family's experience is but one example of the multiple struggles the poor in this country face, even if we never considered ourselves poor.

Poverty: Misconceptions and realities

Poverty is often misunderstood, both in terms of its causes and the breadth of its impacts. In *Pedagogy of the Poor*, Willie Baptist and Jan Rehmann analyze the conceptual ways in which it is often understood. It is considered an unfortunate, yet inevitable phenomenon.

In underdeveloped countries, poverty is said to be the result of not being "fully integrated into the world market," problems

44 percent
of U.S. households would not be able to afford a \$400 emergency without borrowing or selling something.

supposedly fixed by technology and industrialization. Some argue that poverty is caused by poor individual decisions that characterize a "culture of poverty" and are deepened by welfare programs which encourage such decisions including single parenting. it is

understood to be a problem largely confined to minorities in urban areas. Such understandings remove the responsibility from the poverty-producing systems.

In reality, poverty cuts across racial and geographic lines. Going beyond official poverty statistics, 4 in 5 people are likely to

experience some form of economic hardship by the time they are 60 years old. Likewise, 44 percent of households would not be able to afford a \$400 emergency without borrowing or selling something.

Consequently, over one fifth of people receive U.S. government assistance, including people of all racial and ethnic groups, though poverty is disproportionately

experienced by African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics. Still, most people living in poverty are non-Hispanic whites. They make up 42 percent of the poor and the majority of people receiving benefits like food stamps. Additionally,

poverty is no longer confined to urban areas with poverty being higher in rural and suburban areas.

In regards to class, poverty is experienced even among the working class - the poor do work. Of working age adults living in poverty, 45% participated in the labor force in 2014 with most of those not working being either disabled, students, caregivers, or in retirement. The dominating low wage and quality jobs within the job market, with almost half paying less than \$15 an hour, are not enough to meet basic needs which are becoming increasingly expensive.

Poverty: A product of institutions like the immigration system

This poverty, however, does not exist in a vacuum. It is the result of various systems in place which serve to create barriers to achieving the "Life, Liberty and pursuit of happiness" referenced in the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution. Among these is the immigration system.

From its inception, the laws surrounding immigration and the system it established, the rights of some have trumped those of others. U.S. citizenship was first only granted to free white men. The restrictions that followed regarding banned prostitutes, convicts, the mentally unstable and those likely to become a public charge. Nationality was then added with the Chinese Exclusion Act. In addition to legal bans, quotas favored immigrants from western and northern Europe. In 1929, Mexicans were further targeted and hundreds of thousands deported under the

"repatriation campaign." Later on, health, poverty and polygamy also became grounds for exclusion and family ties and skills the basis for entrance.

Today, this system continues under the guise of a distinction between immigrants whose presence is legally allowed and those for whom it is not, with the latter being exploitable but not worthy of "self-evident

...unalienable rights," and instead criminalized. They are those who are able to enter with a visa but overstay it and those who cannot not take the narrow yet lengthy and resource requiring path prescribed by law to come to the U.S. with documents.

For the latter, the lack of security - whether financial, familial or physical - drive them to take the undocumented alternative replete with dangers. Coming from all regions of the world, they run the risk of losing limbs, being kidnapped, robbed, raped, disappeared and even murdered while on their way to and even once in the U.S. Since measures have been taken to militarize both U.S. and Mexican borders, often tied with U.S. economic interest, thousands have lost their lives while immigrating to the U.S. Like for my family, the potential opportunities outweigh these dangers.

For immigrants in both groups, once in the U.S. they run the risk of being imprisoned. Each year, 380,000 to 442,000 people, including unaccompanied children are held in immigration detention. They are held in legally sanctioned and funded prisons run by private corporations where a lack of oversight enable abuses. If and when released, undocumented immigrants are kept under surveillance through frequent check-ins and more recently and increasingly, ankle monitors. The search for a better life is met with punishment and subsequently, criminalized.

In addition to these obstacles, immigrants often take low-paying jobs resulting in household incomes 20 percent lower than that of U.S. families. Undocumented immigrants have the added obstacles of accessing protection and social benefits to

supplement their low incomes.

For these immigrants, as with all immigrants, the limited and often temporary forms of relief which are available to them require that they know about them and that they have access to resources including attorneys and money. These are added barriers.

Furthermore, the protections that do exist - among them DACA, TPS and refugee status - are being more strongly attacked by the current administration with the end of DACA, TPS no longer extended to immigrants from Nicaragua, Sudan and Haiti, and the number of refugees allowed cut back. These threats multiply the uncertainty and vulnerability of undocumented immigrants and even documented immigrants, as well as their friends and families. Hundreds of thousands of people face the possibility of being uprooted yet again.

Immigration and poverty together

Ultimately, immigrants are part of a larger community suffering and facing uncertainty, limiting their right to pursue the life recognized not only by the U.S. constitution, but also globally under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Many of today's immigrants, as well as the poor, are among the many who confront the effects of systems that deny the dignity of their lives. Still, guaranteeing these values remains a goal worthy of pursuing within the U.S. and universally.

For me, the opportunities that my family

and I have been able to take part in hint to the opportunities that are possible. My older sister and I have been afforded the opportunity to attend college thanks to the Higher Educational Opportunity Program, with my sister also being a Gates Millennium Scholar. Still, such opportunities are a means of mediating hardship. Such opportunities, not just in the realm of

education but including all of the basic things people need to live, should be universal.

Evelyn Sanchez is a senior at Cornell University majoring in Development Sociology.

My parents had to leave school at a young age to work and feed themselves. Their upbringing made them determined to provide my sisters and me with a better life.

My father worked as a courier between El Salvador and the U.S. One day when I was two, he was robbed at gunpoint. A month after that, my parents were told that I would need two open heart surgeries in order to survive. That drove my mother to bring my sister and me to the U.S.

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Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria:



Photo: Enrique Gonzalez-Conty

As aid has been non-existent in many areas across Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria devastated the island on September 20, residents have organized community kitchens to feed each other. This sign reads: "Mutual Support Project. Lunch in Loma de la Niña Mariana for all. We accept donations. Monday to Friday, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm. Bring your plate, utensils and cup."

by Ryan Kresge

The ongoing humanitarian disaster unfolding in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria struck on September 20 is exacerbated by the interplay of poverty, structural racism, militarism, and environmental degradation. These are identified as the "four evils" being denounced by the New Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, led nationally by Rev. Dr. William Barber and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis. Puerto Rico suffers from *todos los males juntos* – all of the bad things – that have made a natural disaster into a continuing "people-are-dying story." It is imperative that we contextualize the devastation in Puerto Rico as a part of the war against the poor and dispossessed more generally.

In this sense, Puerto Rico is more than just Puerto Rico: it is one important canary in our collective coal mine. While we acknowledge and support the push for a "people's recovery," Puerto Rico's crisis is a strong indictment of a system that would make possible such widespread suffering.

Hurricane Maria struck the island with devastating consequences. The United States government has yet to respond on an appropriate scale given the fact that Puerto Ricans are both human beings and U.S. citizens. Gonzalez-Conty noted that lack of access to clean water and food has been a major part of the ongoing emergency and has likely contributed to hundreds of deaths in the weeks after the storm: "I went a month after the hurricane so things, at least the roads, were cleared up but you could still feel the emergency. I went to different supermarkets to buy water and there was no drinkable water. The lines were huge. That tells you how critical the situation is." He added that many have gotten dangerously ill from drinking contaminated water. "Puerto Rico has a lot of springs but it's not safe to drink," he said. "People have been in desperate situations and if they're going to survive

A convergence of racism, poverty, militarism and ecological devastation

Impoverishment, racism and U.S. militarism throughout Puerto Rico's history and today have together made it possible for a natural disaster like Hurricane Maria to have such deep and devastating social consequences on the island. Elements of the island's colonial legacy and current status as an unincorporated U.S. territory have set the stage for the slow and inadequate official response. We will incorporate an interview with Enrique Gonzalez-Conty, an Ithaca College Spanish professor, to ground the historical analysis in lived experience. Gonzalez-Conty visited his family a month after the hurricane to bring supplies and help with reconstruction efforts.

they're going to drink whatever they can."

Another obstacle to recovery is electricity. The island's electric grid remains largely destroyed. The possibility of restoring the power grid is hampered by \$9 billion in debt already owed by the power authority. Further, in some areas almost 90 percent of houses were destroyed. This begs the question, who will rebuild these areas given the vast poverty and debt of the working class?

Gonzalez-Conty said, "What's worrisome is that the debt is going to rise. Even if people are dying they still take advantage of the situation. As harsh as that is, and as crazy as that sounds, that's how it works. In Spanish we call it '*Capitalismo salvaje*,' or savage capitalism. Capitalism doesn't have a heart, and it doesn't care if people are dying. It just needs to make money." The privatization of industry on Puerto Rico for the benefit of the rich is continuing in the face of dying Puerto Ricans. Gonzalez-Conty spoke to the

history of privatization on Puerto Rico: "The electric authority in Puerto Rico is one of the last of the national industries that hasn't yet been privatized. For example, they sold the airport and the telephone company. The father of [current governor] Ricardo Rosselló, Pedro Rosselló, was the

"What's happening in Puerto Rico is a war against workers, which is something the Poor People's Campaign talks about."

It's a class war."

- Enrique Gonzalez-Conty

governor in the '90s, and he sold the telephone company. It was a huge fight because people in Puerto Rico didn't want it to be sold, but the neoliberal mentality is to privatize everything, and that destroys unions, which is another goal. It's a war against workers, which is something the Poor People's campaign talks about. It's a class war."

The electricity infrastructure was largely destroyed by Hurricane Maria, and the rebuilding of the infrastructure is in danger of being hawked to private companies. Puerto Ricans protested and defeated a

Mountainous communities like Loma de la Niña Mariana in Puerto Rico are still without water and electricity months after Hurricane Maria.

Residents painted, in Spanish, "S.O.S. Water Food" on the road where low-flying helicopter pilots might read it and bring aid.

Photo: Enrique Gonzalez-Conty



\$300 million contract with a largely unknown Montana-based company named Whitefish Energy Holdings LLC in October, but other privatization efforts are ongoing.

In the vein of the Poor People's campaign, one can look to Puerto Rico's history for examples of injustice that benefit the elite. That is, Puerto Ricans have U.S. passports, but they aren't guaranteed the same privileges as most US citizens. This exclusion dates back to Puerto Rico's inception, and has been maintained by several legislative acts.

In 1917 Congress passed the the Merchant Marine Act, or the Jones Act, which demands that all ships entering a US port from another US port be made and owned by Americans. For Puerto Rico, this creates a dependence on US goods. Further, the Jones Act created a tax haven for the ruling elite by making all the interest on bonds issued by the Puerto Rican government tax exempt on the national, state, and municipal level. This prompted investment in Puerto Rico by the U.S. ruling elite. The unsustainable issuing of bonds worsened an already precarious economic position by encouraging a massive accumulation of wealth by corporations or investors who then aren't required to pay taxes while the government of Puerto Rico consistently failed to meet their bottom line. The issuing of bonds to stimulate economic growth and pay debts coupled with the existence of tax havens creates a burden on the working class to bail out a government that is more interested in promoting business interests than they are in caring for their people.

When a sector of society is shackled with massive debt it is unlikely to have the resources, time, and power to prepare for more sporadic and intense natural disasters. The U.S. government has been preparing for the impacts of climate change since at least 2004.

They released a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review in 2014 which states, "[given] the increasing number of natural disasters with more costly and variable consequences—driven by trends, such as climate change, aging infrastructure, and shifts in population density ... it is imperative to build and sustain core capabilities to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the most high-risk threats and hazards." Climate change is disproportionately impacting those who have been forced to the fringes right now. If the government has been preparing for the impacts of climate change since 2004, why has the response to Hurricane Maria been so lacking?

Gonzalez-Conty diagnosed this problem by pointing to the power that hydrocarbon companies have in government: "Some of the environmentalists on Puerto Rico are trying to push solar energy and move away from petroleum-powered electricity. Of course, the government is not supporting that. Why not? Because, as in the US, the oil companies have a lot of influence. They pay for the campaigns that allow the officials to be in office, so they have bought politicians on the island." Further, given the concentration of 40 U.S. military bases on Puerto Rico, emergency response been slow, especially in rural and mountainous areas. A military with the capacity to deploy deadly force or humanitarian aid to any point on the planet within 24 hours should be able to assist U.S. citizens on an island smaller than the state of Connecticut.

As we analyze disaster response, we must consider historical context: the key role Puerto Rico has played as a US center for militarization. Since its annexation in 1898 after the Spanish-American War, there have been several methods of labor manipulation that have maintained the function of Puerto Rico as U.S. military

outpost and producer. Puerto Rico has gone through several waves of restructuring the labor force.

In the colonial period and directly after, Puerto Rico's primary industry was sugar. When that became economically inviable, the island's workforce was transitioned to industrial production, specifically with the implementation of "Operation Bootstrap" in 1947. Finally, in 1981 the island's economy was reoriented to military industry. All the while, starting in World War I, Puerto Ricans were serving in military forces that fought for US intervention, and ultimately U.S.-based business interests, throughout Latin America. Puerto Rico has gone through many colonial and neocolonial stages that have perpetuated Puerto Ricans' systematic exclusion from enjoying the fruits of their own labor, because they are a source of labor, resources, and strategic military position for the US.

In the face of this historical oppression, the Puerto Rican people have found more than devastation. There are countless narratives about communities banding together to supply themselves with the necessities of life. Gonzalez-Conty said, "I saw also saw more than negatives. I saw people helping each other and creating community projects, which gives me hope. For example, I went to Humacao, which is the southeast of the island where the hurricane hit full on. That part of the island had the worst devastation. People have been creating community kitchens to cook for the whole neighborhood. It is called *Proyecto de Apoyo Mutuo Mariana*. They cook for 350 people."

In the words of Poor People's Campaign co-chair Rev. Barber, "This moment requires us to push into the national consciousness, not from the top down, but from the bottom up." Meaningful change will come in the form of bottom-up, community-based solutions to the struggles that arise out of historical exploitation. People directly affected by problems often come up with the most creative and effective strategies for solving them – knowing the extent and complexity of a problem is essential. In Puerto Rico, there are communities without electricity, so instead of waiting for the electrical grid to be rebuilt by a centralized (and most likely privatized) industry they are demanding community-owned solar power. It may have taken a devastating hurricane to bring that possibility to the forefront, but the possibility now exists to rebuild in a different way.

Ryan Kresge is a senior at Ithaca College majoring in Environmental Studies.

'Vets come home hurting'

U.S. Army veteran Jose Vasquez shares about growing up on welfare, seeing military service as an escape from violence and police brutality, and finally leaving the military as a conscientious objector. He now works with fellow veterans who want to share their stories and their passion for social change.

In October CUSLAR hosted Jose Vasquez, a U.S. Army veteran and former Executive Director of Iraq Veterans Against the War, now known as About Face. Vasquez is currently a lecturer at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City and the Training Director of the Veterans Organizing Institute, a program of Beyond the Choir. He is also part of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. CUSLAR Coordinator Tim Shenk spoke with Vasquez during his visit to Cornell University.

Tim Shenk: You served in the U.S. Army for 14 years. How important is the military in American life?

Jose Vasquez: I'm one of 22 million living veterans in this country, 3 million of whom have served since 9/11. Then you have our families. In addition you have private military contractors, and manufacturing for military equipment is distributed throughout all 50 states. The F-22 Raptor stealth fighter, for example, is produced in 98 places around the country. That's a lot of people touched by the military.

Soldiers are a quintessential part of the American story, back to the Minutemen and the Revolutionary War. General George Washington was this country's first president, and the idea that military leaders make good political leaders has been used ever since. The military shapes our economy and our foreign policy. Militarism, which is the dominance of war values, is deeply institutionalized.

TS: Did you grow up around the military?

JV: My dad is a Vietnam vet, so I've been around vets' issues all my life.

I was born in 1974 in the South Bronx. This was in the midst of industrialization and the "Bronx is Burning" period where landlords were burning down buildings to get people out and make money on the insurance.

My dad did two tours in Vietnam, and he was not all together when he got home. We dealt with domestic violence, and my dad drank a lot.

My mom decided to move with four kids to California and raise us. I experienced the Bronx in the late '70s early '80s and then LA where the Rodney King riots happened while I was in high school.

TS: What drew you to enlist yourself?

JV: I wanted to get away from gang violence, police brutality and a lack of access to jobs. On career day at my high school, all of the branches of the military showed up. They rolled a tank onto the basketball court, and people were rappelling off of the gym.

I grew up on welfare. I knew my parents weren't going to be able to pay for college, so the military was a way out. It was an escape hatch from the craziness of the early '90s in LA.

TS: Can you say some about your years of service?

JV: I shipped off for basic training in 1992, and my first duty station was Fort Benning in Georgia. I was there for a year in the 24th Infantry Division. Then I got stationed in Hawaii for three years. I was with the 25th Infantry. My first job was combat oriented. It was called "reconnaissance specialist."

I enlisted to get away from gang violence, police brutality and a lack of access to jobs. I grew up on welfare. I knew my parents weren't going to be able to pay for college, so the military was a way out.
- Jose Vasquez

U.S. MILITARISM IN LATIN AMERICA TODAY
A CONVERSATION WITH JOSE VASQUEZ

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Jose Vasquez served fourteen years in the U.S. Army and was honorably discharged in 2007 as a conscientious objector. He is the former executive director of Iraq Veterans Against the War. Currently, Jose is a lecturer at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY) and the Training Director of the Veterans Organizing Institute, a program of Beyond the Choir. His research focuses on processes of militarization and the politics of veteran status in contemporary U.S. society.

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Vasquez at Cornell

On the afternoon of October 13, members of the Ithaca, NY and Cornell University communities gathered to hear guest Jose Vasquez share his thoughts on the United States' current and historical military presence in Latin America.

Vasquez, who had spent 14 years in the U.S. Army, spoke from a veteran's perspective on the role of the U.S. military in Latin America.

Active in the veteran community, his experience with Iraq Veterans Against the War and with Beyond the Choir's Veterans Organizing Institute informs his analysis of the militarism and militarization of the present moment.

Vasquez presented details on the federal military budget as compared to allocations for food and agriculture and critiqued the slow response to the humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico. "There are 40 U.S. military bases on an island the size of Connecticut," he said. "The military can mobilize anywhere in the world within 24 hours but it can't get food and water to U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico?"

Vasquez presented a thorough analysis and provided personal anecdotes that invited the audience into his experience.

Vasquez teaches at John Jay College and is finishing a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City. He explores the politics of sacrifice among veterans in American society. -Paige Wagar

Basically, you're behind enemy lines, which I didn't fully realize as a high school student when I signed up, but my dad immediately recognized what that job was and how dangerous it was.

At my first duty station everybody from the lowest private to the commander of the unit were combat vets, because they had just gotten back from the Gulf War. That instilled a seriousness in me about this profession. A lot of them had photo albums of their experiences in war, including dead bodies, blown-up tanks, Iraqi children -- all of the bad stuff.

I had those images in my head as I was training and doing active duty.

Fast-forward to September 11, 2001. I was in New York and in the Army Reserve. I had a lot of questions about what we were about to embark on. The way politicians were talking was concerning to me.

I wasn't political at all. I had never voted prior to September 11, which I'm not proud to say, but I was completely disconnected from political life. All I cared about was pursuing college and using my G.I. Bill.

The military was my second career with the caveat that I could get deployed at any point.

My political consciousness is a long story, but ultimately I left the military as a conscientious objector in May of 2007.

TS: When did you get involved with Iraq Veterans Against the War?

We have to reject a blanket adoration of vets. Vets come home hurting in so many ways, and those experiences tend to be left out of the larger narrative.

- Jose Vasquez

JV: I was doing organizing work for at least two years as a reservist. In 2007 my ties to the military were severed, and I was honorably discharged as a conscientious objector. In the meantime I started grad school.

TS: Your current research is about "the veteran mystique." Are there certain things people expect of you because you've been a soldier?

JV: Certainly. Vets are featured in a narrative about patriotism and sacrifice. We're held up as those who have been willing to risk our lives for the greater good. We have to reject a blanket adoration of vets, because that has a tendency to shut down the conversation about what's really going on. Vets come home hurting in so many ways, and those experiences tend to be left out of the larger narrative.

TS: You're now Training Director at the Veterans Organizing Institute, which works to develop the leadership and organizing skills of veterans who are working for progressive social change. What skills do vets bring to social change work?

JV: The Institute helps vets to understand their position and how to use that powerful part of their identity and experience to speak up. There's a set of skills that is assumed every soldier or veteran has. "Team player" and "works well under pressure" are supposed to be part of what soldiers do.

These skills translate to social change work. World War II vets like Medgar Evers and Cesar Chavez had an ability to be leaders and a willingness to put themselves in harm's way.

Vets have skills in logistics and planning, strategy and tactics. One thing that has been missing from the U.S. anti-war movement has been the lack of a larger strategy.

Mobilization, or protest, is only a small part of the work. You have to be able to respond to the strategy of the opposition. What do you do, for example, at Standing Rock, when you start seeing the direct transfer of equipment from the military to the police? How do you respond? You have to develop leadership, which includes knowing history.



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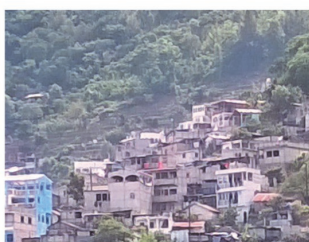
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Indocumentada

My mother's story of raising two kids while undocumented in New York City



Above, proud graduate Julissa Martinez stands with her mother and brother. Julissa's mother came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic and recently gained citizenship. Below, one of the few photos she has from her younger days. Photos provided.

by Julissa Martinez

My mother grew up in a mountain village in the Dominican Republic and has been an immigrant in the U.S. for 23 years. For 19 of those years she was undocumented, but because she never talked about it, I grew up oblivious to what being undocumented meant for her or our family.

Even though growing up I didn't know my mother could be deported, one thing I did know was that it was embarrassing not to have much money. At school, a teacher asked what our parents' occupations were. After I said my mother was a babysitter and my father was a mechanic, my classmates told me these weren't "real jobs" because it didn't live up to their expectations of what a real job entailed.

Because of my mother's irregular status, she could never find anything that paid very well. My father lived with us but the older I got, the more he wasn't much of a father

figure in my life. He was more the man who paid our rent and continued along with his day.

My mother supported herself, my brother and me by working in a factory for seven years sewing costumes and making about \$100 a week. After getting laid off, she worked as a babysitter at home. Babysitting was very unstable for my momma. Some weeks my mother made \$200, which, for us, was a lot of money, but there were times when she had no children to babysit, leaving us with no income. During those times, my mother resorted to selling Dominican-style flavored ice that she would make at home, selling them for a dollar apiece at the park. This was similar to those who sell empanadas in the park to provide income for their families.

Though deportation was always a possibility, my mother said she never did anything that would draw attention to herself to get herself deported. She



feared the economic instability more. She couldn't bear thinking that she couldn't put food on the table for my brother and me.

Today she works as a Home Health Aide. Although it hasn't been such a drastic difference in financial income it has enabled us to be much more stable and to have the ability to receive government assistance such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which many

may know as being "Food Stamps". SNAP is a monthly allotment from the government that low-income families can receive to acquire food. This wasn't an attainable resource we had when she was undocumented because my mother's status didn't permit her to apply for the assistance.

There are approximately 11 million undocumented people in the U.S. today, but it's not only the undocumented who go hungry. One in eight Americans, or about 41.2 million people, are food insecure, which means they lack access to sufficient nutritious food. When my mother didn't have money for groceries, she resorted to food pantries that were an hour train ride away.

Though deportation was always a possibility, my mother feared economic instability more. She couldn't bear thinking that she couldn't put food on the table for my brother and me.

She said she came to this country *pensando que los Estados Unidos me iba a resolver los problemas* -- "thinking the United States would solve my problems." She was the second youngest of 15 siblings from the village of Juncalito, Calaverna in the Cibao region of the Dominican Republic. Though she is better off than most of her siblings who stayed, the U.S. certainly hasn't been the end to all her problems.

In 2019, I, my mother's oldest child, will be receiving a bachelor's degree. Many people would call this a success story, in which an immigrant woman could work hard enough to send her child to college to pursue a better life than she had. Yet in today's economy, with another recession predicted for next year, a degree is no guarantee of a more stable life than my mother had.

I believe that no one should have to go through what she went through just to survive, feed her family and put her kids through school. This country has enough resources for no one to be poor and no one to go to bed hungry.

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Julissa Martinez is a junior at Ithaca College majoring in Sociology, with minors in Counseling and Latino Studies.

'We are tired of the system destroying us'

A grassroots bid for the presidency from Mexico's margins



Photo: allimite.mx

María de Jesús Patricio Martínez, Marichuy, is an indigenous healer and is the face of a human-rights-based campaign for president in Mexico, led by the National Indigenous Congress.

"De nuestro dolor nació nuestra rabia, de la rabia nuestra rebeldía y de la rebeldía nacerá la libertad de los pueblos del mundo. Porque el corazón de nuestra madre tierra vive en el espíritu de nuestros pueblos."

"From our pain our anger was born, from the anger our rebelliousness, and from the rebelliousness freedom of the peoples of the world shall be born. Because the heart of our Mother Earth lives in the spirit of our peoples."

by María Ramírez Flores

On a chilly morning, a woman sits on a sidewalk near the Cathedral in Mexico City. She is wearing a lime green blouse and a bright pink long skirt. To fight the cold morning air, she wraps herself and her baby with a black, blue and white *rebozo* -- a shawl. A plastic container with a few coins lays in front of her. She is a "María": a poor indigenous woman -- often accompanied by children -- who begs for money.

Her real name does not matter, and for most people neither does she. She represents the idea of "indigenous" among the urban middle-class: a poor illiterate person who speaks broken Spanish. Some middle-class Mexicans do not even look at her. More than one blames her for her situation: if she were not lazy, she would get a job instead of begging. Others toss their spare change. A few may think it is unfair. Truth be told, non-indigenous and middle-class Mexicans rarely dwell on the systemic oppression and discrimination that indigenous communities suffer. In contrast with this silence, indigenous communities are raising their voices.

In the last decades of the 20th century, scholars like Bartra and Otero document an increase in movements that demand an end

to injustice and abuses against indigenous people. The most iconic is the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). The Zapatistas denounce the exploitation, oppression, and injustices that indigenous communities and other marginalized groups suffer under the current political and economic

systems. On the first day of 1994 the EZLN declared war against the Mexican State—the same day that NAFTA came into effect -- they said NAFTA was a death sentence for the indigenous way of life, and they were obligated to resist. The Zapatistas stormed five cities in the state of Chiapas. The Army responded.

Civil society pressured the government for the army to retreat: the Zapatistas had gained national and international sympathy. In February 1996 the EZLN and the Mexican Government signed the San Andrés Sakamch Agreements. These Agreements established the inclusion of indigenous rights into the Mexican legal framework. In October of that year members of 43 native tribes, nations, and peoples created the National Indigenous Congress (CNI). The CNI embraces the San Andres Agreements and supports people's resistance. In October 2016, the CNI established the Indigenous Government Council (CIG), a grassroots organization that seeks to become a political alternative.

Last May, the CIG elected María de Jesús Patricio Martínez "Marichuy" -- a 57-year-old indigenous woman -- to run as a CNI supported independent candidate

in the Mexican presidential elections on July 1. Her election is itself an act of defiance: an indigenous woman is standing up against racism, classism, and misogyny. The movement has an openly anti-capitalist agenda that denounces the exclusion of indigenous peoples, women, LGBT communities, and migrants. They are vocal about the exploitation of workers and the accumulation of resources in the hands of a few. The movement also condemns the destruction of the environment, and they berate national and multinational companies that pollute water and ravage the land.

Marichuy entered the Mexican political arena with a platform based on human rights, individual dignity, and solidarity. The implications of the movement go beyond the introduction of an anticapitalist platform into Mexican mainstream politics. Marichuy's bid makes visible the state of indigenous populations in Mexico. She also provides a voice for those who are at the margins. Her candidacy is symbolic, but it brings real hope to people who want a change. Per Mexican electoral law, to be on the ballot she needs to get 866,593 citizens to provide their signature before February 19, 2018.

María Ramírez Flores is a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate in Cornell University's Sociology department.



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Marichuy, la irrupción necesaria

por Raúl Romero

El 7 de octubre de 2017, María de Jesús Patricio Martínez entregó en el Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE) la documentación requerida para registrarse como aspirante a candidata independiente a la presidencia de México. Aquel día, Marichuy -como le llaman cariñosamente- pronunció un discurso revelador de lo que será el proceso que encabeza. Ante cientos de hombres y mujeres, Marichuy dijo: “Nos tenemos que organizar y darnos la mano entre todos y acabar con este sistema capitalista, este sistema patriarcal, este sistema racista... clasista”.

Casi seis meses antes, Marichuy, indígena nahua de 53 años de edad, fue elegida por el Concejo Indígena de Gobierno (CIG) como su Vocera. Además, tanto el CIG como Marichuy cuentan con el respaldo del Congreso Nacional Indígena y del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN). La intención es que Marichuy pueda aparecer como candidata independiente en la boleta de las elecciones presidenciales de julio de 2018.

Pero, más que buscar administrar el aparato de Estado, lo que se intenta con esta iniciativa es generar un proceso organizativo en el que los pueblos indígenas y no indígenas, explotados y violentados, “de abajo y a la izquierda” como dicen los zapatistas, puedan articularse y construir a largo plazo una forma de gobierno distinto, uno donde sea el pueblo el que mande y el gobierno el que obedece. O sea que el proyecto no se acaba en 2018, sino que es de largo plazo.

Marichuy y decenas de Concejales recorrerán el país escuchando y hablando con quienes quieran acercarse. El periplo ya inició en octubre pasado y los primeros territorios que visitaron fueron algunos de los que las bases de apoyo del EZLN tienen bajo su control. Territorios rebeldes donde los pueblos mayas se autogobiernan, es decir, donde los pueblos-gobiernos ejercen la autonomía. Durante dicho recorrido, miles de



María de Jesús Patricio Martínez, Marichuy, candidata a la presidencia mexicana en 2018 elegida por el Concejo Indígena de Gobierno, representa una alternativa en la política electoral del país.

bases zapatistas salieron a saludar a quien reconocen como su vocera: Marichuy. En todos los actos, las mujeres zapatistas fueron las encargadas de dar la bienvenida y los mensajes políticos. El análisis de la realidad global, nacional y local marcó los diferentes discursos. De igual manera, las actividades artísticas realizadas en cada lugar recorrido evidenciaron el gran peso que las Artes -y también las Ciencias- tienen en el “otro mundo posible” que el zapatismo construye.

Un rasgo distintivo de este proceso organizativo es la palabra colectiva. En todos los eventos públicos la palabra de Marichuy siempre es antecedida por la intervención de otras mujeres concejales que cuentan las problemáticas de sus pueblos, sus luchas de resistencia ante el despojo y la violencia y, en el mejor de los

casos, narran como han construido alternativas.

Para conseguir que Marichuy aparezca en la boleta electoral del 2018, las instituciones de México demandan que reúna 866,593 firmas de ciudadanos de todo el país. Para ello se requiere de *smartphones* y *tablets* con determinadas características. Esta medida, en un país con más de 50 millones de personas empobrecidas, es abiertamente clasista: deja fuera a quienes no pueden comprar dichas tecnologías. Sin embargo, a pesar de las complicaciones, en todo el país han surgido Redes de Apoyo al CIG y su Vocera, y desde ahí se intenta sortear los diferentes obstáculos. La Red del Estado de Morelos, por ejemplo, convocó a una campaña masiva de donación de celulares para apoyar a las comunidades y colectivos que no pueden comprarlos.

En la Ciudad de México, las redes de apoyo instalan todos los días mesas de recaudación de firmas. Se les ve en plazas públicas, cines, centros comerciales, estaciones de metro y cualquier lugar donde les sea posible. Un sector importante en esta zona del país son los estudiantes universitarios, quienes han conformado una Red que tiene presencia en diez instituciones públicas y privadas de educación superior.

Al igual que con los zapatistas y en el CIG, las mujeres están jugando un rol muy importante en todas las redes de apoyo. En un país en donde siete mujeres al día son asesinadas por el hecho de ser mujeres, la propuesta del Concejo de defender la vida y luchar contra el capitalismo, pero también contra el racismo, el machismo y el patriarcado, tiene mucho sentido.

La segunda semana de febrero es la fecha límite para lograr juntar las firmas. Todas las reuniones y actos que ocurran de ahora a esa fecha servirán para organizar y articular un gran movimiento anticapitalista que irrumpe en la agenda política nacional, una fuerza política necesaria en un país en el que la muerte, la corrupción y la impunidad son parte de la vida cotidiana.



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IN ENGLISH

Read this article in English at
cuslar.org/marichuy

Raúl Romero vive en México y participa de la campaña electoral de Marichuy.

Jesuits support indigenous autonomy in Mexico

by Fr. Arturo Estrada, SJ
and Héctor A. Portillo

The Jesuit Mission of Bachajón was established on December 3, 1958, the feast of Saint Francis Xavier, nearly 60 years ago. The Mission is located in the High lands of Chiapas, inside the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas. Its land area of 1,351 square miles extends over six municipalities and covers more than 200,000 people, most of them Tzeltal, one of the many indigenous peoples of Mexico.

For us Jesuits in Mexico, it has always been a priority to work with the indigenous peoples of our country. More recently, we have understood this work as necessarily tied with the defense and strengthening of their rights, their lands, and their culture.

In Bachajón, we have made the Tzeltal culture and peoples the center of our work. We have strived for decades to acculturate the Church, to create and consolidate an autochthonous church. Thus, along with a group of Tzeltals, we have translated the Bible, catechism, and every liturgical ritual. Today, Tzeltals in the Mission's territory can live their Catholic faith as part of their own culture, in a way that matches their understanding of the world and its peoples. Another somewhat newer effort has focused on accompanying their struggle for economic, cultural and political autonomy. We work with them to retrieve and preserve what they call



Jesuit deacons pray and bless water in a ceremony with indigenous Tzeltal people in Chiapas, in southern Mexico. Jesuits defend the indigenous right to expel political parties from the region and govern their communities communally.

Photo:
Héctor A. Portillo.

slamalil qu'inal, or harmony, both in the individual and the community.

During our latest strategic planning, the Bachajón Mission encouraged all communities to hold conversations and diagnose which were the biggest challenges or issues each of them faced.

One common challenge arose: the people wanted an alternative to the political system, because the political parties do not respect or nurture the Tzeltal culture or the way they organize. Quite the contrary: political parties, they said, bring only division and conflict.

In 2016, the Mission, along with the Movement to Defend Life and Land, or MODEVITE in Spanish, organized a mass pilgrimage across 11 municipalities to protest the government and business

projects that bring death and break communal harmony. In this pilgrimage, the political parties were again identified as a cause for conflict in each community, and again the people expressed their desire to find an alternative.

As the communities talked about how to confront their challenges, and learned more about experiences of other indigenous peoples in Mexico who have faced similar ones, an idea emerged: that indigenous peoples have the right to govern themselves according to their own traditions, and that this means no more political parties. This right is enshrined in Mexico's Constitution and the International Labor Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention.

Since there are federal, state and local elections in 2018, the matter became ever

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more urgent. The threat of all the parties' efforts to mobilize and/or suppress the vote in the communities looms closer and closer every day. Again, the people talked among themselves, and with us. Eventually, it was decided to file a petition so that two municipalities, Chilón and Sitalá, rule themselves by *usos y costumbres*, and kick out the political parties. Thus, the idea of a "communal government" began to solidify both in the Mission and the communities.

On November 17, they filed the petition and demanded via press conference their right to self-organization and governance be respected by the state's electoral authority. We await a reply.

Meanwhile, we continue to reflect on the challenges of this idea. What will such a "communal government" look like? What role could women and youth play in such a government? What happens when the political parties and the government they control threaten to cut off social programs that have become integral to many people's economies?

On this, we are encouraged by the fact that the people continue to talk and discuss among themselves about the communal government, and in recent assemblies, they have highlighted the need for the project to involve women and youth at all levels, including that of decision making.

Therefore, although there are no answers yet, we see the Tseltal people working and talking together to build the answers. Moreover, by promoting and supporting social and

solidarity economics -- for example, through a cooperative of coffee growers - or by creating processes and projects specifically aimed at politically and economically empowering women or youth, the Bachajón Mission has already developed some ways to help the Tseltals face those challenges.

There is another set of questions we ask ourselves as Jesuits: how much can we get involved in this struggle? How much should we? And how can we do it, without taking over a role that is rightfully theirs? That is, how can we accompany and support their struggle, while strengthening their leadership?

The answers, we believe, lie at our conviction that our main responsibility and purpose is to work so that the Tseltal people have the peaceful, dignified life they deserve. Therefore, we are bound to walk with them, encourage them and protect them as best as we can. We can and should put the Mission's political capital at the service of the Tseltals.

We can and should use our resources as Jesuits to bring national and international attention to the plight of the Tseltals, and make sure the government is held accountable for any and every act of abuse, even for those of omission. We can and should use our privileges of class, of race, and of ecclesial position and even our bodies to protect the physical, emotional and cultural safety of the Tseltals. We can and should take

advantage of the Mission's infrastructure to promote and encourage the processes, always respecting and strengthening the Tseltal leadership in each community.

And we can and should accept our own political roles, in the Mission and in every community, to "cheer the hearts" of the people, to use a Tseltal expression, and provide words of support that let them know that they are not alone in their struggles, that we, and all the Jesuits in Mexico, walk beside them. That we believe, as they do, that they are capable of governing themselves. That we have seen them exercise their autonomy and use their traditions to solve conflicts in every community, or to generate and share wealth through different experiences in solidarity economics.

In other words, we trust them. True to the Society of Jesus' commitment with justice, as an inherent part of promoting our faith, we believe in the Tseltals as agents able to reach their autonomy. Our role is to support, cheer and encourage. And, maybe, to encourage them to reflect further on some issue or another, based on our experiences inside and outside the Bachajón region. Today, we assume the motto of the National Indigenous Congress: never again can we have a Mexico, any Mexico, without them, the indigenous peoples of Mexico. Because not only do they have a rich and wonderful past, they also deserve a rich and wonderful future.

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Community and unity

On being welcomed into a Dominican home

by Evelyn Liu

I open my eyes to the sound of a too-slow moving fan and the sticky feeling of dried sweat on my cheeks. The screen of my phone is too bright and I have to squint to see the numbers. *It's only five-thirty. I really need to use the restroom but it feels a little too far. Then again, the rooster outside is a broken record unable to stop, and I won't be able to sleep anyway.*

Outside of my room, the house is still dark, but someone has the radio on.

Entonces Jesús llegó de Galilea al Jordán, a donde estaba Juan, para ser bautizado por él.

I spy Doña Grecia's sleeping form beneath the mosquito net, breathing softly to the rhythm of the biblical recitation. *Y he aquí, se oyó una voz de los cielos que decía: Este es mi Hijo amado en quien me he complacido.*

I wonder if she listens in her dreams.

The rooster is still crowing and it's nearly seven AM. My roommate is tossing and turning in the bed two feet away, sheets flung off, spread out like a starfish.



Photo: Ann Lei

The street vendors have started to call.

¡Mango! ¡Chinola! ¡Un cartón de huevos noventa pesos!

As the morning progresses, everything becomes brighter and shinier. The sun is hotter, the humidity wetter, the vendors uncomfortable, the roosters frustrating, the food an adventure, my friends unknown, the mosquito bites felt, the hugs and kisses fumbled, the *cariño* appreciated and the streets an everlasting maze.

I would love to get used to the heat, to understand my host mom's accent and to not have to give anyone blank stares when my language skills fail me. But there is

Two Dominican sisters share a secret on the stoop of their home, a Cornell Global Health homestay in the Simón Bolívar neighborhood of Santo Domingo.

Each summer since 2014, Cornell University students have taken part in an eight-week Cornell-CUSLAR Global Health Program in the Dominican Republic. Immersed in Spanish, students learn about holistic medicine, research a topic related to public health and live with families.

also something exciting and worthwhile about being able to feel everything -- something good about life being raw.

Breakfast is a culinary adventure, and Doña Grecia always makes sure to cook a family-sized portion for the two of us Cornell students to share. During the first few days, Doña sat at the table staring at us as we ate, savoring the smiles of appreciation and the words of praise that we gave in recognition of her art and livelihood.

A constant source of complaint is Frekito the cat. *I hate this cat!* Doña huffs, *jumping on my table and stealing my bread!*



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Even when she shuts the doors, Frekito always finds a new way in to follow Doña around in what I can only describe as adoration.

She may claim to hate the cat, but I caught her feeding him a slice of cheese this morning, so maybe the strict Doña has more of a soft side than she lets on.

Most of the day, Doña Grecia sits slumped in her white plastic chair by the doorway waiting for people to come by. They purchase cakes and juices from her, staying to sit on the front steps and chat. Communicating with her is still a bit of a struggle for me, so I try new ways to approach her each day. Today I pull up a stool and join her by the doorway, and we somehow get into a conversation about faith. She immediately lights up. Maybe this will be my way in.

Tonight, she is the happiest that I've ever seen her, singing hymns among her sisters in a *grupo de oración* -- a prayer group -- that meets here every Wednesday night. There is genuine joy in her voice, a tapping sandaled foot, and a tremor that only slightly betrays her old age.

*¡Alegre la mañana que nos habla de Ti!
¡Alegre la mañana!*

Everyone in the prayer group sings along to the chorus, but Doña Grecia holds the hymn book and sings alone during each verse. All the other women sway along, tapping feet, waving babies and mumbling slightly, eyes shut.

At the end of the first round of singing, Doña puts down her hymn book and stares fiercely at each of the women before her.

¿Qué es la Comunión?

What is Communion?

She doesn't wait for the other women to answer. "*Dos palabras: Comunidad y unión.*" She continues:

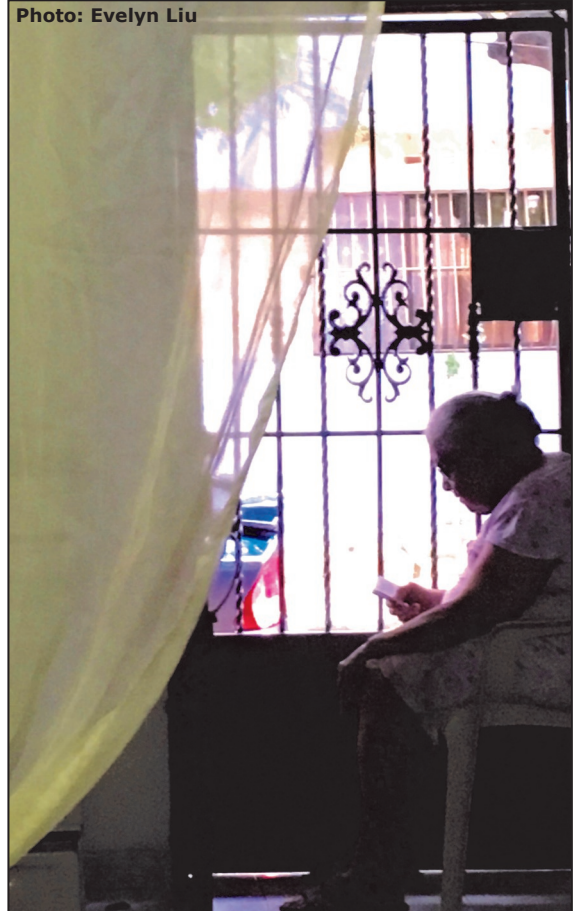
"Our community must be unified because the community is a reflection of the union of the holy trinity. This means that we must love each other, we must care, we must look out for each other and hold each other accountable. The children of this neighborhood and the visitors we host will be like our own children."

At this she looks directly at me.

Ladies, we are a family, and this barrio is our home.

Evelyn Liu is a junior Global and Public Health Sciences major and was in the DR program in 2017.

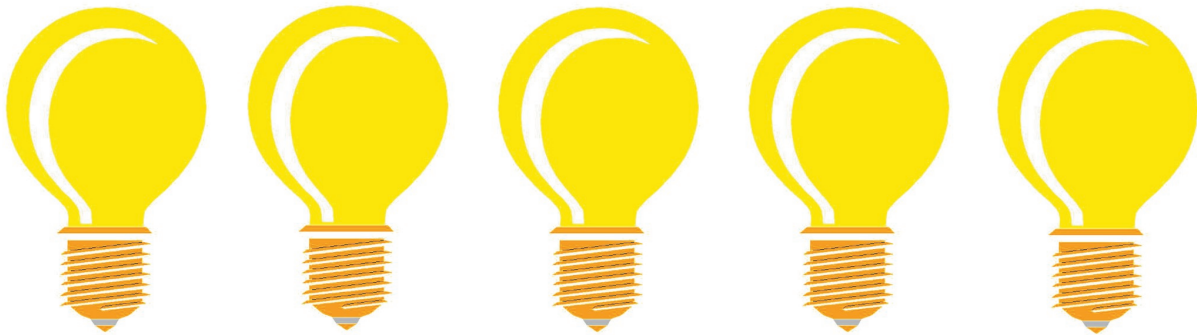
Photo: Evelyn Liu



Grecia, a homestay mother with the Cornell-CUSLAR Global Health Program in Dominican Republic, sells food to neighbors from her front door. Students often report homestays as a highlight of the program.

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Film: Discrimination is alive in the Dominican Republic, targets Haitian descendants

by Denisse Gayosso-Lucano

Imagine if everyone who couldn't prove their family's citizenship back to 1929 were denied basic services and in danger of deportation. This is the reality for around 200,000 Dominicans of Haitian descent, who have lived in the DR all their lives but suffer second-class treatment with no legal way to work, attend school or even buy a cell phone plan.

As part of the Cornell-CUSLAR Global Health Program in the Dominican Republic last summer, I was fortunate to watch a new documentary by Juan Carlos Gonzalez Diaz called "Hasta la Raíz," which tells the stories of many young people struggling for their right to citizenship.

Several of the film's protagonists, led by activist Ana María Belique, presented the film to our cohort at a *batey*, a town originally built for sugarcane workers in the 1950s and still without running water or plumbing. This documentary was eye-opening, as it exposes harsh discrimination in the Dominican Republic. It made our group reflect on similar issues in the U.S., with regard to the U.S. government's revocation of DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, in September.

"Hasta la Raíz" portrays the injustices that Belique and other Dominicans of Haitian descent have been suffering from the revocation of their birthright citizenship in the Dominican Republic. Many, like her, have parents who migrated to the Dominican Republic. They migrated when they were recruited to work in the sugarcane fields after the United States occupied Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1916, and through binational agreements throughout the 20th century.

Belique said, "our parents have given their lives, their strength and all their blood in the Dominican sugarcane plantation, and today many of them are seen as rejects of this society that need to be thrown in the garbage."

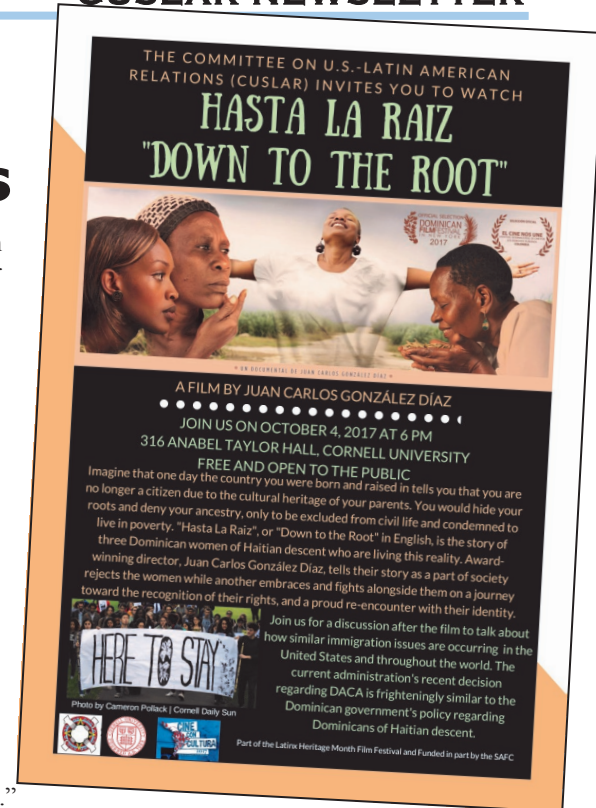
The Dominican Central Electoral Board has been withholding birth certificates since the 1990s for arbitrary reasons. Even after a law was passed in 2015 that allowed Dominicans of Haitian descent to gain temporary work permits and stay in the Dominican Republic, most of the permits have now been allowed to expire with no next steps in place.

The documentary's many voices say these rulings are a result of racism, nationalism, discrimination and an irrational fear of "Haitian invasion." Calling immigration from a neighboring country an "invasion" seems overblown, however, since only 6.87 percent of the Dominican population is composed of Dominicans of Haitian descent, according to journalist Allyn Gaestel.

Without citizenship status, one can't study, work, travel or access the health system. The film argues, convincingly, that withholding citizenship is the equivalent to civil genocide.

Belique fights for herself and the rights of people in her situation: she says there shouldn't be a need to justify that you're Dominican if you were born and raised in the Dominican Republic.

A similar trend to what is happening in the Dominican Republic is visible in the U.S. It is equally inhumane to have DACA students have their status revoked and again have to worry about having



Cornell University Global Health students saw the film, "Hasta la Raíz," in the Dominican Republic in July, hosted by protagonist and human rights leader Ana María Belique. CUSLAR then screened the film in October at Cornell as part of the Latinx Heritage Month Film Festival, hosted by Ithaca College professor Dr. Enrique González-Conty.

no housing, savings, income, healthcare, security and education. This should be viewed as a crime, to put innocent human beings in despair. Immigrants, documented or not, are not a threat to homeland security; the real threat is the extending polarization that continues to promote hatred, prejudice, racism, inhumanity, and cruelty over unity, dialogue, understanding and love.

Denisse Gayosso-Lucano is a senior at Cornell University who participated in the Global Health Program in DR in 2017.

Similar nationalist talk in U.S.

by Noel Reyes

I drew connections between what the Dominican government did and what Donald Trump said he wanted to do during his campaign. Over the winter break of 2015-16, I worked for an industrial petroleum cleaning company. We traveled all around the northwest cleaning out massive fuel tanks of gas, oil, and diesel. The people I worked with were all very conservative, hard-working middle-class Americans.

I remember one job where we had to travel and stay in a hotel overnight.

In the morning, the news was on TV in the lobby. Trump was saying he was considering pushing for a constitutional amendment that would get rid of birthright citizenship.

One of my co-workers, a 40-something year old white man, turned to me and said, "Noel, you better watch out -- if Trump gets elected, he's gonna deport your ass!"

Everyone broke into laughter. I laughed it off, but on the inside I was nervous that there was a small possibility that he could be right. As a son of Salvadoran immigrants, the only reason I can live here

and reap the benefits of U.S. citizenship is because I was born in California.

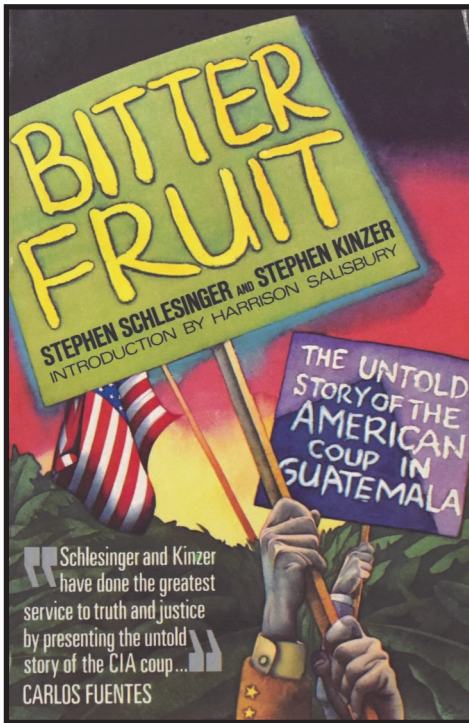
Watching "Hasta la Raíz" in the *batey*, which was originally a work camp for Haitian sugar cane workers in the Dominican Republic, I realized that my worst fear was these people's reality. The Dominican government is robbing them of a homeland and has forced the identity of Haitian onto thousands of Dominicans who have never even been to Haiti. The same way I consider myself a Salvadoran-American, these people should have the right to consider themselves Haitian-Dominicans.

Noel Reyes is a senior at Cornell University who participated in the Global Health program in DR in 2017.

BOOK REVIEW

Bitter Fruit

The untold story of the American coup in Guatemala



by **Adriana Guzmán**

Backroom deals, CIA meddling, and overthrowing a government at the request of a powerful corporation.

This sounds like the plot of the latest Tom Cruise movie, but it's not fiction, and so far, there hasn't been a happy Hollywood ending. *Bitter Fruit* is the story of the U.S.-backed coup in Guatemala in 1954 that continues to affect Central American politics more than 60 years later.

Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer wrote *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* for the very reason enclosed in the title, to reveal what *really* happened in the 1954 coup d'état in Guatemala and to explore the stories of those involved in orchestrating Operation Success.

The authors go on to explore the tumultuous history that sprouted just six years after the coup and grew into a nightmarish civil war. At the time of the book's publication in 1982, the civil war was in its 22nd year, and Guatemala was in the midst of the worst two years of it.

In 1983 the authors republished the book with a prologue that explored then-current

happenings of Guatemala's civil war, recounting President Efraín Ríos Montt's egregious violations of human rights and provocation of genocide of the Ixil indigenous population. Ríos Montt was convicted of genocide in 2013 and was sentenced to 80 years in prison, but was later exonerated.

Today, *Bitter Fruit* is both relevant and insightful, not only about historical events, but because of how it challenges assumptions of the United States as benevolent global leader and purveyor of democracy around the world.

In order to better understand the present global situation, especially as it seems corporate America is driving U.S. foreign policy with the goal of obtaining cheaper resources and labor, we would do well to consider the case of Guatemala in the 1940s and '50s.

In 1944, the October Revolution removed General Jorge Ubico, a dictator, from power, and Juan José Arévalo became the first democratically elected president of Guatemala. At the end of Arévalo's six-year term, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán was elected to further the ideals of the October Revolution. President Arbenz was responsible for agrarian land reform that repossessed fallow land from large landowners.

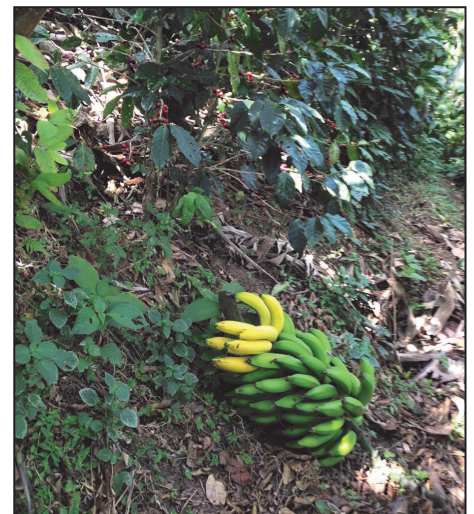
One of those landowners was the American-owned United Fruit Company, which held a monopoly over the banana trade, railroads, telegraphs, telephones and the only naval port in Guatemala. The United Fruit Company used its influence with American politicians to drive an intervention in Guatemala led by the CIA that resulted in the ousting of President Arbenz and the installation of Colonel Castillo Armas. This coup, called Operation Success by the CIA, ultimately led to a downward spiral into civil war, delaying the next democratic elections until 1996.

Bitter Fruit explores the stories of those involved in orchestrating Operation Success. The book goes beyond the specifics of Guatemala and into the depths of U.S. foreign policy, making a case that the U.S. government and corporations believe that they are above the law, that they are superior to the people of developing nations, always pushing their own interests and, unfailingly, getting away with it.

Bitter Fruit looks specifically at the external meddling with regard to the 1954 coup orchestrated by the CIA, the U.S. Department of State, other U.S. officials and neighboring Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua at the urging of United Fruit.

The authors explain the intricacies of planning the coup, transforming public opinion, and creating a public façade that nearly everyone outside (and some inside) Guatemala ate up as the truth. *Bitter Fruit* is a crucial addition to the

history books and the reporting of the situation in Guatemala because it explores in detail the events that transpired, the connections exploited and the ugliness of global politics when influence trumps virtue, good intentions and human rights.



Adriana Guzmán is a senior at Cornell University studying Biological Engineering and minoring in Global Health and International Development. She has worked with CUSLAR for the past year and a half.

READ MORE!

To read more about the current situation in Guatemala and how the 1954 coup effects still linger today, read Adriana's article discussing President Jimmy Morales and the CICIG. Newsletter, available at cuslar.org



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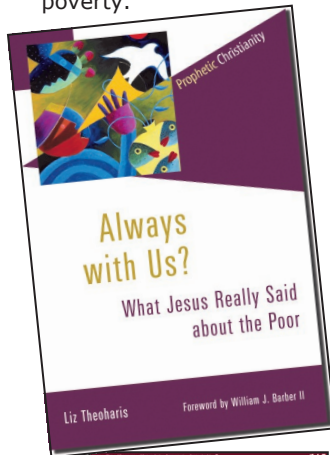
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Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis
speaks at right with
fellow Poor People's
Campaign national
co-chair Rev. Dr.
William J. Barber II.

Her new book,
Always With Us?
is a return to the radical
anti-poverty message of
Christianity and a call to
reclaim Biblical language
in the fight to end
poverty.



We recommend the article, "Questions Must Be Raised: Who Are the Poor? Why Are We Poor?" by Willie Baptist and Liz Theoharis.
kairoscenter.org/who-are-the-poor

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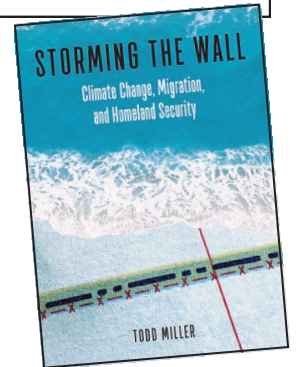
Connecting the dots: Our 2018 reading list

A fundamental part of working for change in society includes educating ourselves and others. Rev. Dr. King said, "Social action without education is a weak expression of pure energy."

CUSLAR promotes action informed by experience and knowledge of history. Being familiar, for example, with the history of CIA involvement in the coup and civil war in Guatemala, as outlined by Adriana Guzmán on page 23, can inform our analysis of the relationship of the state, the private sector and the military today.

Often the best way to learn is with others, through collective study and discussion. If you'd like to start a reading group on any of the texts listed here, **contact us at cuslar@cornell.edu**.

Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security



This new book by journalist Todd Miller, published last fall by City Lights Press, looks beyond the bombastic rhetoric of the current U.S. administration to reveal a much deeper and long-lasting plan to deal with the effects of climate change and the refugee crises that will accompany it.

By connecting data from the Pentagon, border enforcement and the private sector arms and security industries, Miller makes a convincing argument that increased border security is "climate adaptation for the rich and powerful."

CUSLAR and the Cornell Farmworker Program hosted Miller at Cornell University in November. In his talk, he challenged his audience to be part of the solution. "Answers will come from the front lines, from social movements of people most affected."



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version of the report,
The Souls of Poor Folk,
and other materials on
the **Poor People's
Campaign: A National
Call for Moral Revival** at

poorpeoplescampaign.org



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