

FARMER TO FARMER

A U.S.-CENTRAL AMERICA SOLIDARITY PROJECT

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Newsletter

Winter 2004



Craig Adams at the School of the Americas

F2F MEMBER RESISTS SOA: FACES PRISON

In the last 6 years, many Farmer to Farmer members have attended the annual demonstration at Fort Benning in Columbus, GA, to call for the closing of the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA). Each year, some protesters choose to perform acts of civil disobedience, risking arrest. This past November, Craig Adams took this risk a step further. Knowing full well that he could be sentenced to up to six months in prison and a fined up to \$5,000, he joined 28 other activists as they entered the military base, were arrested and charged with criminal trespass. I spoke with Craig about this decision, which will likely lead him to a prison sentence.

Recently renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC), the school, which is run by the U.S. military and funded by U.S. tax dollars, trains Latin American soldiers in counter insurgency. "Graduates from the school have been consistently linked with the

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GET INVOLVED!

Farmer to Farmer is looking for people to join our board. The board is a great opportunity, fun and doesn't require a lot of time. If you are interested wish to recommend someone please call Jody at: 643-3603 or email us at info@farmertofarmer.org

JACK NELSON-PALLMEYER TO SPEAK AT FARMER TO FARMER ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 13TH

"Without fundamental changes in U.S. foreign policy and in the corporate-dominated global system, we will be headed for many new El Salvadors and new Colombias. The SOA/WHISC and its graduates have more than fifty years experience in repressive tactics. This is why the Pentagon and the White House fight so hard to keep the school open. And this is why closing the SOA/WHISC remains a vital issue and why it must be part of broad-based movements to change U.S. foreign policy, and to promote democratic alternatives to corporate-dominated globalization."

---Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer

We are honored to announce that Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer will be speaking at our annual meeting at 1 p.m. at the Congregational Church, 430 Wilson Avenue in Menomonie (potluck at noon follows a 10 a.m. business meeting). He will speak on US foreign policy, especially as it relates to Latin America. Jack will also make the connection between our country's foreign policy and the issues facing us as Americans at home. To many of us he is one of the heroes of the nonviolence movement.

Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer is an educator and writer who lives with his family in Minneapolis. He is a professor of Theology and Peace Studies at the University of St. Thomas. After earning a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York, he served as national coordinator of the Politics of Food Program for Clergy and Laity Concerned. Later he directed the Hunger and Justice Project in Minnesota for the Lutheran Church. With his wife, Sara, he co-directed a house of international study in Nicaragua for the Center for Global Education, a program of Augsburg College. His first book, *Hunger for Justice: the Politics of Food and Faith*, published by Orbis Books, was widely acclaimed. He has published numerous books since including *Families Valued*, *War on the Poor*, and *School of Assassins: Guns, Greed, and Globalization*. Jack, Sara, and their three daughters are members of the Community of St. Martin, a neighborhood ecumenical community that shares tools, skills, childcare, meals, problems, celebrations, worship and play, runs a bookstore/restaurant and joins hands in social justice work. Jack has been a tireless writer, speaker, advocate (and many would say a prophet) for social justice for 35 years.

COCA-COLA BOYCOTT

TOMA MUERTE, TOMA COCA-COLA

Drink Death, Drink Coca-Cola

(graffiti written on a wall in Colombia)



Farmer to Farmer has joined the international boycott of Coca-Cola.

The campaign to boycott "Killer Coke" is spreading across the U.S. joining others action around the world. The Coca-Cola boycott was launched July 22 by the Colombian food and beverage worker's union, SINALTRAINAL, to shine a light on the murders of nine Coca-Cola trade unionists. Trade unionists in Colombia have been threatened, disappeared, and murdered by right-wing military death squads, which financed by the Colombian government. Colombia receives the third highest amount of US military aid of any country in the world. In response to the atrocities, the Colombia Action Network has been organizing the boycott of Coca-Cola from coast to coast.

Farmer to Farmer members Bridget O'Meara and Craig Adams have traveled to Colombia. Craig met with the Coca-Cola union organizers and heard first hand accounts of the violence and killing. In fact, one person he met with in the plant was later murdered. Please join Farmer to Farmer in supporting this boycott.

The 14 Coca-Cola board members also serve as top policymakers on the boards of other companies, including: AT&T, Avon Products, Bristol-Myers Squibb, ChevronTexaco, Dell Computer, FleetBoston Financial, Georgia Pacific, General Electric, GlaxoSmithKline, Hilton Hotels, IBM, International Paper and *The Washington Post*. It should be noted that Warren Buffett, Coke's largest shareholder, owning more than 8.1% of its stock. SunTrust Banks is the second largest shareholder with 5.3% and is a major creditor of Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola Chairman and CEO Douglas Daft serves on the boards of both Coca-Cola and SunTrust, as does James Williams, SunTrust's former CEO. Douglas Ivester, Coca-Cola's retired CEO, also sits on the SunTrust board. SunTrust President and CEO Phillip Humann serves on the boards of both SunTrust and Coke's largest subsidiary, Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE), as does CCE's former CEO, Summerfield Johnston, Jr. Each owns substantial equity in both Coke and SunTrust. For further information and a complete list of the Coca-Cola Board Members, go to website: www.killercoke.org

Please send the enclosed post card to the Board of Coca-Cola

note: Coca-Cola has been responding to the post cards sent with an official letter denying the unions claims. We wanted to let you know so you are prepared for this.

FAST FOOD NATION

by Eric Schlosser Reviewed by Kisten Gillespie

Much of what the average American needs to know about the disturbing transformation of our national food system can be found in the pages of *Fast Food Nation*.

Eric Schlosser includes a concise summary of historical events that shape current food choices and discusses the role of government, corporations, middle men, farmers and consumers in the fast food phenomenon. As small farms in the United States continue to decline and more people move off the land, few Americans are paying attention to where their food comes from. A landslide of negative effects has followed: families are making unhealthy food choices, highly processed foods are taking over the supermarket, fast food restaurants are producing poor quality products, laborers at all levels are being exploited, obesity is becoming an epidemic, and the list goes on. It should be clear to anyone who is paying attention that the long term effects from this shift are detrimental to our health.

Schlosser points out that you can tell a lot about a culture by what they eat and that, in a short period of time, the fast food industry has changed not only the American diet but also our landscape, economy, workforce, and popular culture. In 1970, Americans spent \$6 billion on fast food. In 2000, that number shot up to \$110 billion; the bulk of which is being spent by middle and lower middle class consumers. It appears that the fast food movement, like that of giant discount stores, perpetuates the gap between the classes. The poor people can eat at fast food restaurants and shop at Wal-Mart, while richer people can choose pricier options, such as organically grown food.

According to Schlosser, McDonalds, more than any other fast food chain in the world, plays on the vulnerable psychology of mass consumerism. Throughout North America the "golden arches" are strategically placed near freeway exits where no one can miss them. To most Americans, there is something very nostalgic, even patriotic, about those arches, and it is no accident. Marketing to children has increased tremendously

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Wouldn't it be great if your next used car purchase could help fight poverty and provide \$200 to Farmer to Farmer?

It can!

Find out more at: www.idealauto.org or at www.westcap.org
1-800-565-3066

West CAP Glenwood City, WI

West CAP is a nonprofit public benefit corporation that works with families and communities to conserve energy and promote self-reliance in Wisconsin and the upper Midwest. The Ideal Auto program assists low-income families in purchasing late-model fuel efficient cars to improve their access to jobs and quality of life. All profits from cars sold to the general public go to support the low-income program.



Lake Atitlan Guatemala

UPDATE FROM GUATEMALA

From Francisco Esquina
November 2003

Dear Farmer to Farmer,

We are extremely grateful for your support in our farming and education of our students. Primary elections were held November 9th for Departmental Office and the Presidency. Berger and Colum were the top runners and will be up for the run off election on December 28th.

Here in Santiago Atitlan the same mayor Diego Esquina Mendoza was reelected. He has performed many good works including improving the streets and keeping the water running and he a member of our civic committee, so we are happy.

The students that graduated in October and November are; Pedro Domingo Esquina (elementary teacher), Maria Eugenia Esquina (bilingual secretary), and Deloras Chcquibal (teacher). Other students finished the year. Thank you for your support. Pedro Domingo Esquina took the engineering exam and is enrolling in a preparatory program in engineering at the University. Nicolasa Rosario Esquina Cosigua is doing well in her university program of teaching and will begin her student practice teaching in June. We wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Best wishes and happiness to all in Farmer to Farmer.

Your Friends in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala

GUATEMALA'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

By Luke Saunders

Guatemala's newly elected President, Oscar Berger, of the GANA (Grand National Alliance) coalition, was sworn in on January 14. But in a nation with such a tumultuous political history, the story of who didn't win, and the nature of the electoral process, was big news as well.

Efraim Rios Montt, the former military dictator (1982-83) and current President of the Congress, won a court battle just to be on the presidential ballot for his party, FRG (Guatemalan Republican Front), whose incumbent President Alfonso Portillo was widely viewed as a puppet of Rios Montt. Despite reports of electoral fraud, Rios Montt's sound defeat in the first round, indicated widespread repudiation of his party and its rampant corruption veiled by populist rhetoric.

Guatemala's Constitution calls for a run-off election, which pits the two leading vote-getters against each other in any presidential election when no candidate garners at least 50% of the vote. The run-off set Berger, referred to as "the US Embassy Candidate," against Alvaro Colom, who ran third in the 1999 election for the ANN (Alliance for a New Nation) coalition, which included the URNG (La Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca or the "Guatemala Revolutionary Unity") party composed of the former revolutionary movement of Guatemala's 36 year civil war.

Berger won the December 28 runoff, with 54% of all votes, against Colom and his UNE (National Union of Hope) party. Colom won in 13 of Guatemala's 22 Departments, gathering support largely from rural populist votes and also from liberal thinkers. But Berger won big in the capital, Guatemala City, and in all the departmental capitals.

In Guatemala's multiparty system, political allegiances constantly shift--parties often join forces to gain power, then morph into new parties that then fade away. However, Colom rejected Berger's post-election invitation to participate in the GANA cabinet. And the names who are in Berger's cabinet suggest he might not be the "clean alternative" after all. In a nation where half the citizens speak indigenous languages, Berger's administration includes names like Harris Whitbeck (who administered the genocidal "Beans and Bullets" strategy of Rios Montt in the eighties,) Willy Kaltschmitt, Richard Aitkenhead, and Otto Perez Molina (who served as an intelligence officer during the genocide.) These names sound curiously detached from the poverty-stricken realities of Guatemala's majority, and indicate the focus of Berger. In his acceptance speech, Berger stated, "Solidarity and inclusion is part of governance. We will extend it to those who have less access to quality of life and who have suffered from war." However, in the same speech he revealingly asserted "We'll look to foreign investment, for only that way can we offer work for all Guatemalans." Seventeen years after Guatemala's formal shift from military to civilian rule and eight years after signing of the 1996 Peace Accords, posturing continues, with elites painting their leaders as they wish and true development moving at a snail's pace.

Craig Adams continued from page 1

worst human rights abuses and massacres in Latin America. Among the SOA's nearly 60,000 graduates are notorious dictators Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola of Argentina, Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru, Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador, and Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia." (<http://www.soaw.org>) In 1990, School of the Americas Watch was formed and has been organizing annual demonstrations at the school ever since.

Craig has been attending the demonstrations since 1998 when he went with his daughter, Erin Altemus (she had been there in 1997 as well) and for him it felt like the natural thing to do. He has been with Farmer to Farmer since its inception. He and his family have lived in Central America. He said that part of what led him to this choice was hearing about the human rights violations in Latin America that are happening because of our government training of Latin American soldiers and our government condoning repressive Latin American policies.

Craig's trial is set for 26 January, 2004, in Georgia. He and the others will probably be sentenced that day or the next. Based on past judgements, Craig expects (and hopes for) a 3 month sentence and a \$1,000-\$2,000 fine. He's a little nervous, though, because the judge seems more severe this year, and already upped the bond from \$500 to \$1000 for the 29 people arrested this year. After sentencing, they will be able to choose to either begin serving their term immediately in a Georgia county jail or self report when called in six to eight weeks and serve it in a federal prison (probably minimum security) in or near their home state. If Craig is given a three-month sentence, he plans to go to jail immediately so that he can be home in time to see his youngest son, Louis, graduate from high school.

I asked Craig what experiences contributed to his decision to risk prison for this cause. He told me that, when he and his family arrived in Nicaragua to help a dairy cooperative that was getting started, the members of the coop were still traumatized because some of their members had been kidnapped and killed a couple of months earlier. If the contras responsible for those kidnappings and killings were not trained at the SOA, they appeared to have the same training and used techniques which are taught at the school.

He spoke of his experiences in Guatemala, where he lived for a time with the Hicho-Ramos family and witnessed their heartbreak and grief at having their daughter kidnapped off the street with other university students who were doing peace

and justice work on campus. She was never heard from again. The U.S. Army School of the Americas taught Latin American soldiers to target peace and justice workers, union organizers and others who threatened the status quo. He was in Guatemala during the peak of the civil war there; a time when the human rights atrocities got much worse

Meeting the members of the Weavers' Cooperative in Santiago Atitlan (the people F2F imports coffee from) also illustrated to Craig the problems perpetuated by the U.S. training military personnel in Latin America. In the early 1990s, a massacre in the town square in Santiago Atitlan left 11 people killed and 40 injured. They had gathered peacefully and unarmed to protest the presence of the military in their town; the soldiers opened fire. I have seen the monument to the murdered there myself; it is a sobering sight. (For a brief history of Santiago Atitlan and its struggle and victory in having the military removed from the town, go to <http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~gpasch/tesis/pages/guatemala/otr04/hmnrts.htm>)

In August of 2002, Craig went to Colombia with Witness for Peace on a human rights delegation. After living in Central America and seeing the fascism U.S. foreign policy supported in the late 1980s and the 1990s, to go to Colombia and see it all again really woke him up to the agenda of the U.S. government. As a U.S. citizen, he says, he benefits from living here with freedom of expression and a comfortable middle class life-style and that this life-style is supported by the oppression of other people in the form of cheap labor and natural resources.

To Craig, this is a tremendous cost, one he is unwilling to continue supporting. He told me that U.S. foreign policy is so insidious it is hard to believe unless you visit some of these countries for extended periods of time or live in them. The U.S. effort in Colombia is only against the violence of the left and not addressing that of the right; a policy that encourages the civil war rather than discouraging it. Through its power in organizations and agreements like the IMF (International Monetary Fund), World Bank, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and SAPs (Structural Adjustment Programs), the U.S. government is using economics to force policies in poorer Latin American countries. It seems like it's almost another world. Craig feels frustration and that after 13 years of all these people protesting this policy, it's time for change. He's not sure what it will take to close the school, but he is willing to take a little more personal risk to see it happen.

Article by Cari C. Witcher with much appreciation to Diana T Witcher for her criticism and editing contributions.



UPPER MIDWEST
ORGANIC FARMING
CONFERENCE

La Crosse, Wisconsin
February 26-28th 2004

Join farmers, students, educators, extension agents, activists, small business owners and other organic-agriculture enthusiasts from throughout the region as they come together to celebrate "15 years of growing our roots" at this exceptional event! Check out www.moeseorganic.org for latest updates on conference schedule, registration and hotel information. If you are interested in being a volunteer for reduced registration, please contact Bridget O'Meara at bridget@mosesorganic.org



coffee coffee coffee



**COFFEE
UPDATE**

The coffee sales continue to grow. In 2003 we sold over \$27,000 worth of coffee! This is

fantastic. We are working to continue to grow our markets. The more we sell, the more growers Father Greg can buy from. We want to expand our market beyond the already established fair trade markets. Contact us with any places that may be interested in our coffee. The businesses that are currently selling our coffee are: Mississippi Market in St. Paul- both locations-on Selby and Randolph

North Country Coop in Minneapolis on Riverside
Mill City Coffee House on California St., Northeast Mpls.
Whole Earth Coop in River Falls, Wisconsin
West Wind Supper Club in River Falls, Wisconsin
Acoustic Cafe in Menomonie, Wisconsin
Legacy Chocolates in Menomonie, Wisconsin
Menomonie Market in Menomonie, Wisconsin
West Cap serving our coffee in their offices in Glenwood City and Menomonie, WI
Dunn County Pottery Downsville, WI
Caradori Pottery- Eau Claire WI
French Confections-Eau Claire WI

mark your calendars
Annual meeting March 13th

Fast Food Nation Continued from page 2
since the 70's. Companies like Disney and McDonalds use advertising strategies such as the "cradle to grave" plan, which is geared toward making children "brand loyal" for life. The desired response to such advertising is children begging parents ("pester power") for specific products. The idea is to control the consumer choices of parents by manipulating children. Corporate research that indicates that this works exceptionally well.

Fast Food Nation also exposes entrenched power in the meat packing industry, which has led to the deregulating of OSHA and the watering down of USDA policies. Schlosser succinctly traces the consolidation of corporate power to its effects on labor practices and the spread of diseases, such as E. coli and Salmonella. Possibly the most poignant subject for me is his descriptions of the adverse effects on struggling farmers and ranchers as they try to compete with the giants. The story of Hank, a Colorado rancher who fought for sustainable agriculture, was particularly sad and frustrating. In the end, he took his own life. The reasons why can only be speculated.

This is incredibly well researched book that makes a convincing argument against agribusiness and the fast food dynasty. It is particularly illuminating read for anyone who has not followed the rise of agribusiness in this country or doesn't come from an agriculture background. A friend of mine recently swore off fast food after reading the book, and as far as I know, hasn't touched it for the last 6 months.

The newsletter will now be posted on the Farmer to Farmer website! If you want to start getting the newsletter by email only or both email and regular mail, please let us know.

website: www.farmertofarmer.org

email: info@farmertofarmer.org

Jody (715) 643-3603

editors note: In the last newsletter we amazed everyone by our fantastic sales of \$14,042 at the Dunn County Fair. Yes, you are right, it was fantastic-one zero can make a lot of difference! It should have been \$1,442.

Newsletter by: Bridget O'Meara and Jody Slocum