President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is wildly popular among Mexicans at home and abroad. It’s not just because of his domestic policies; he is also playing a key role in challenging U.S. dominance in Latin America.

When the Mexican president traveled to Washington, DC, on July 12, his most exciting encounter for Mexicans in both the United States and Mexico was not his meeting with President Joe Biden but his impromptu encounter with well-wishers outside his hotel room at the Lombardy. Some had driven from places like Chicago and New York City just to get a glimpse of their president.

The video of the encounter, which must have been a nightmare for the Secret Service protecting him, went viral. It showed the president (known by his initials AMLO) sticking his head out the window, blowing kisses, catching a bouquet of flowers thrown to him, and being serenaded by mariachis singing the song “Amigo” (“You are my soul brother, a friend that in every way and day is always with me”). AMLO showered them with praise, thanking them for their sacrifice of coming to the United States and working hard in order to send money back to their families in Mexico. “You are heroes and heroines,” he said, with a huge grin. “Our economy is rising because of what you send to your relatives. You are exceptional migrants. I love you very much.” He shared with them his plans to meet with President Biden and push for immigration reforms so that they could come and go legally. The adoring crowd below shouted back, “We love you, President, we are with you.”

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador

Roger Waters: Why I Must Speak Out

Seventy years ago, my father—2nd Lt. Eric Fletcher Waters—died in Italy fighting the Nazis. He was a committed pacifist, and a conscientious objector at the start of the war, but as Hitler’s crimes spread across Europe, he swapped the ambulance he had driven through the London blitz for a tin hat and a commission in the Royal Fusiliers and he joined the fight against fascism. He was killed near Aprilia in the battle for the Anzio Bridgehead on Feb. 18, 1944. My mother—Mary Duncan Waters—spent the rest of her life politically active, striving always to ensure that her children, and everyone else’s children, had no Sword of Damocles in the form of the despised Nazi Creed or any other despicable creed hanging over their heads.

Thanks to the good people of Aprilia and Anzio, I was able to pay tribute to the father I never knew by unveiling a memorial in the town where he died and laying a...
There Is No Planet B

By Mike Ferner

In his 1833 State of the Union address to Congress, President Andrew Jackson, arguably the worst U.S. President from the perspective of Native Americans, said, “That those tribes cannot exist from the perspective of Native Americans, said, “That those tribes cannot exist surrounded by our settlements and in continual contact with our citizens is certain. Established in the midst of another and a superior race, and without appreciating the causes of their inferiority or seeking to control them, they must necessarily yield to the force of circumstances and ere long disappear.”

Given how Jackson and North American culture treated the first people to occupy their continent, one could imagine that some native people took comfort in what Gandhi wrote in 1908 in Hind Swaraj, “Western civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed.”

Prophetic words, indeed. But the climate crisis was unknown in 1908 and Gandhi had no way to foresee today’s on-going mass extinction event, the only one in the planet’s history caused by the greed of just one species.

Friend, the signs are visible all around us: acidic, rising seas rout millions who have fewer places to go as deserts expand. Even in temperate zones, summers become intolerable and ice disappears. Famine pursues the multiplying wildfires and droughts. Fascists are not only on the march but it will take to save our Mother Earth and just do it. Do it with abandon. … Do it simply out of love and because it’s the right thing to do. … Do it because this is not a drill.

Join Veterans For Peace!

Veterans For Peace is an international organization made up of military veterans, military family members, and allies. We are dedicated to building a culture of peace, exposing the true causes and costs of war, and healing the wounds of war.

For more information or to join or support our work, scan the QR at left or visit veteransforpeace.org.

Peace & Planet News

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Think about what it will take to save our Mother Earth and just do it. Do it with abandon. … Do it simply out of love and because it’s the right thing to do. … Do it because this is not a drill.
Por Mike Ferner

E l su discurso sobre el Estado de la Unión de 1833 ante el Congreso, el presidente Andrew Jackson, posiblemente el peor presidente de los EE. UU. desde la perspectiva de los nativos americanos, dijo que sus tribus no podían existir “establecidas en medio de otra raza superior” y que pronto tendrían que desaparecer.

Después de siglos de tal brutalidad, quizás algunos nativos se sintieron consolidados con lo que Gandhi escribió en 1908, que “la civilización occidental es tal que uno solo tiene que ser paciente y se autodestruirá”, si considera la crisis climática actual y la amenaza de las armas nucleares, las palabras de Gandhi fueron verdaderamente proféticas.


Trasladaré en español por Zorailyn Martinez.

Mike Ferner es un ex-presidente de Veterans For Peace que se desempeñó como ayudante médico del hospital de la Marina durante la Guerra estadounidense en Vietnam. El ex editor de Peace & Planet News y autor de Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran for Peace Reports from Iraq.

La respuesta de Jackson a estos retos es un llamado a reparar lo que pertenece a su ‘Madre Tierra’.

Pien ses en lo que se necesitará para salvar a nuestra Madre Tierra y simplemente hágalo.

Letter to President Biden:

Dear President Biden,

I am writing you as a proud member of Veterans For Peace and its former pres- ident. We have been following the war in Ukraine closely, since well before the Russian invasion on Feb. 24 of this year. We were alarmed when you and President Obama supported the regime-change coup in Ukraine in 2014, which was openly cheered on by the State Department’s Victoria Nuland, and spearheaded by self-described Nazis.

We watched in horror as those same self-described Nazis set fire to an Odessa union building full of Ukrainians who were protesting a new law outlawing the Russian language as an official language of Ukraine. Fifty people were burned alive or shot and beaten to death. This in a country with a long history with Russia and millions of Russian speakers.

Appalled at the aforementioned atrocities, the Russian-speaking population of the Donbass in Eastern Ukraine declared their independence from Ukraine, and were soon attacked by Ukrainian militias. These self-described Nazi militias were then incorporated into the Ukrainian army, and the attacks continued. By the time that Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24 of this year, 14,000 Ukrainians had already been killed in that terrible civil war.

Russian President Vladimir Putin repeatedly warned and almost begged the U.S. and NATO: Do not push your hos- tile military forces any further onto Rus- sia’s borders. Taking Ukraine into NATO would cross a serious “red line.” Russian troops then massed along the border with Ukraine, in a clear show of force.

Mr. President, you might have stopped this war from happening merely by announc- ing that Ukraine would not become part of NATO and that you would end the militariza- tion of Ukraine. You could have accepted President Putin’s offer to negotiate a new se- curity arrangement in Europe. We looked on in disbelief as you rather cavalierly brushed aside Russia’s legitimate concerns. It looked like you were saying, “Bring it on!”

Well, Russia brought it on. We were hor- rified by the Russian invasion as well as by your response. You armed Ukraine to the teeth and fanned the flames of war. Ukraine (and the Black Market in Europe) is now awash with high-tech U.S. weaponry. A full-on war has killed many thousands of civilians, made millions homeless, and de- stabilize
ted much of the world. We are now facing economic disasters and fearing the all-too-real possibility of nuclear war. Why?

As veterans who have experienced the carnage of war, we are concerned about the young soldiers on both sides who are being killed and injured in the tens of thousands. We know all too well that the survivors will be traumatized and scarred for life. These are additional reasons why the Ukraine war must end now.

We ask you to listen to veterans whoWarning: ‘Enough Is Enough—War Is Not The Answer’

We want urgent, good faith di- negociations, not escalation.

Former Veterans For Peace president urges negotiations, not escalation.

Gerry Condon is the former president of Veterans For Peace and a co-author of ‘War Is Not The Answer.’ We want urgent, good faith diplo- macy to end the war in Ukraine, not more U.S. weapons, advisors, and endless war. And certainly not a nuclear war.

It is not too late to do avoid further di- saster, Mr. President. It is never too late to do the right thing. Show us a Profile of Courage and save the world from World War III, a war that could literally de- stroy human civilization as we know it. You must distance yourself from the neo- cons and weapons manufacturers who are giving you terrible advice. You must reverse course now. Drop the weapons and embrace diplomacy. For the sake of Ukraine. For the sake Russia, Europe and the United States. For the sake of all the peoples of the world.

Negotiate, don’t escalate!

Gerry Condon is the former president of Veterans For Peace and a co-author of ‘War Is Not The Answer.’
Central American Migrants and U.S. Labor History
By Elizabeth Oglesby

The growth of service workers unions has demonstrated the organizing power of undocumented workers.

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Central American Migrants and U.S. Labor History
By Elizabeth Oglesby

Tech workers, warehouse employees, and baristas have notched many victories in recent months at major U.S. companies, long deemed long shots for unions, including Apple, Amazon, and Starbucks.

To me, these recent union wins recall another pivotal period in the U.S. labor movement several decades ago. But that one was led by migrants from Central America.

I’ve been researching human rights and immigration from Central America since the 1980s. In today’s polarized debates over immigration, the substantial contributions that Central American immigrants have made to U.S. society over the past 30 years rarely come up. One example is how Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants helped expand the U.S. labor movement in the 1980s, organizing far-reaching workers’ rights campaigns in immigrant-dominated industries that mainstream unions had thought were untouchable.

More than 1 million Salvadorans and Guatemalans came to the United States from 1981 to 1990, fleeing army massacres, political persecution, and civil war.

Back then, President Ronald Reagan warned apocalyptically that Central America was a threat to the United States, telling Congress in 1983 that “El Salvador is nearer to Texas than Texas is to Massachusetts.”

Just 2% of Salvadorans and Guatemalans who applied for asylum in the 1980s—so few that a 1990 class-action lawsuit alleging discrimination compelled the U.S. government to reopen tens of thousands of cases. In recent years, about 10% to 25% of their asylum petitions were granted.

Then, as now, many undocumented immigrants in the United States worked in agriculture or service industries, often under exploitative conditions. Unionization barely touched these sectors in the 1980s.

More broadly, the bargaining power of labor unions was suffering under Reagan, who started his presidency by firing 11,000 striking air-traffic controllers. Downsizing and outsourcing at American companies in the 1980s also eroded union membership and pushed wages down.

Many Guatemalans and Salvadorans were veteran community organizers. They had faced down government terror to participate in unions, peasant leagues, Catholic social justice campaigns or Indigenous rights initiatives—all currents in 1980s revolutionary Central America.

Drawing on these experiences, many Central American immigrants began to organize in their U.S. workplaces, demanding higher wages and safer conditions.

Salvadorans Led Justice for Janitors to Victory
Salvadoran immigrants in California were pivotal in Justice for Janitors, a pioneering low-paid workers’ movement that inspired today’s campaign for a $15 minimum wage.

Justice for Janitors began in Los Angeles in 1990, aiming to reverse wage drops that janitors had suffered over the previous decade.

Rather than do battle with the small subcontractors that hired cleaning crews for big office buildings, Justice for Janitors targeted the corporations that owned those buildings. Led by experienced Salvadoran unionists—some of whom had fled death squad violence back home—the movement used nonviolent civil disobedience and strikes to expose exploitative labor practices.

Speaking out could be dangerous. Police clubbed participants at a peaceful march through Los Angeles’ Century City neighborhood on June 15, 1990. Undocumented workers feared deportation.

But it worked. Janitors in Los Angeles won a 22% raise after their 1990 citywide strike, showing mainstream labor unions that even the city’s most marginalized workers—undocumented Central Americans, many of them women—had real organizing power.

Over the next decade, some 100,000 janitors nationwide joined the campaign under the banner of the Service Employees International Union. The movement negotiated contracts that increased wages and health benefits for janitors across the United States.

Guatemalans Defended Florida Farmworkers
Hundreds of thousands of people fled Guatemala during the early 1980s, escaping a genocidal army campaign against Indigenous communities that left entire regions of its highlands charred and empty.

Roughly 20,000 of these Guatemalan refugees, many of whom spoke Mayan languages, landed in Florida in 1982, finding work in sweltering tomato farms and citrus groves.

Up to 90% of the fresh tomatoes in U.S. supermarkets come from Florida.

Working conditions in the state’s tomato fields were dismal in the 1980s. Migrants earned just 40 cents per 32-pound bucket of tomatoes picked. Some were forced by armed guards to work against their will, as a 1997 court case about the use of slave labor in Florida’s tomato fields exposed.

In 1993, Guatemalan immigrants joined with Florida’s Haitian and Mexican farmworkers to form the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a community worker-allied movement several decades ago. But that one was led by migrants from Central America.

In 1990, the Guatemalan immigrants at Case Farms’ plant in Morganton, North Carolina, organized a union drive.


After five years of walkouts, marches and hunger strikes, the Case Farm workers voted in 1995 to join the Laborers’ International Union of North America. The company refused to negotiate, however, and the union pulled out of contract talks after six years.


These unionization stories show Central American migrants in a new light—not as criminals or victims, but as people who have helped make the United States a safer place for workers.

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Elizabeth Oglesby is associate professor of Latin American studies and geography at the University of Arizona.
He has also offered asylum to jailed whistleblower

Julian Assange and recently suggested that the

Statue of Liberty should be dismantled and returned to France if Assange is extradited and imprisoned in the United States.

He opened up the former presidential residence to the public, allowing millions of Mexicans and tourists to enjoy the palatial home and gardens.

Another reason for the president's popularity is the extraordinary effort he puts into communicating with the public—perhaps more than any other leader in the world. From the day he took office, he has been holding marathon press conferences from Monday to Friday, starting at 7 a.m. and lasting for two or three hours. Called “La Mañanera,” the conferences are broadcast live on public television and streamed on a dedicated YouTube channel, as well as directly on the president's official website. The president's office estimates that an astounding 10 million people watch the program.

Unlike scripted press events in the United States, these are free-flowing discussions where the president talks in a folksy style about everything from COVID-19, infrastructure projects, and the migrant crisis to Mexico's best foods.

He has garnered support and gratitude for bold actions he has taken in solidarity with beleaguered leftist leaders and nations. After the Organization of American States (OAS) sparked a coup against Evo Morales in 2019, AMLO sent a plane to whisk Morales out of the country and offer him asylum in Mexico. Morales credits AMLO with saving his life.

He has also offered asylum to jailed whistleblower Julian Assange and recently suggested that the Statue of Liberty should be dismantled and returned to France if Assange is extradited and imprisoned in the United States.

He has railed against the U.S. sanctions on Cuba, calling them “depraved” and a key reason that Cubans are migrating. He said that the people of Cuba deserve a “dignity award” for resisting U.S. interference for over 60 years and that the entire country should be declared a World Heritage site.

Mexico hosted dialogues between the Venezuelan government and that country's opposition and resisted U.S. pressure to recognize opposition leader Juan Guaidó as “interim president.”

AMLO's hemispheric supporters also appreciate his recurring call for the Spanish king and the Catholic Church to apologize for the conquest of Latin America.

But AMLO's position as a regional leader was really boosted by his refusal to attend President Biden’s June 2022 Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles because of the exclusion of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. This had a snowball effect, prompting other heads of state to skip the gathering and turning Biden's summit into a flop.

The Summit of the Americas is closely associated with the OAS, another institution AMLO has criticized, especially for its role in the Bolivian coup. AMLO has called for replacing the OAS with a truly autonomous body—"a lackey to no one." That substitute would be the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

CELAC has only existed for 10 years and, unlike the OAS, it includes Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua but not the United States and Canada. Its goal is to stimulate Latin American and Caribbean independence, integration, and autonomy.

AMLO insists that the 200-year U.S. domination of Latin America has been exhausted and must come to an end. “We are not a protectorate, a colony, or anyone’s backyard,” he declared in a groundbreaking July 2021 speech. “We say ‘adios’ to the impositions, interference, sanctions, exclusion, and blockades.” Instead, he called for a relationship based on nonintervention, self-determination, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

These ideas resonate across Latin America, especially with the new left tide sweeping the continent—the election of President Gustavo Petro in Colombia being the latest and most spectacular, given the country's close alliance with the United States. If Lula wins in Brazil in the upcoming elections, the continent will be ripe for a new regional architecture and setting its own terms for its relations with the United States. The continent will also be grasping for new models of development that don’t rely on extractivism and corporate profits but improving the quality of life and the environment. Millions across the hemisphere will look to their new leaders, as well as AMLO and CELAC, to help navigate that process.

Can a Deeply Unequal Nation Totally Reverse Course?

Colombia’s New president has just placed a bet on greater equality. His nation’s rich can’t see him collecting.

By Sam Pizzigati

The alarm bells are—sort of—ringing. Bloomberg reports, in Colombia’s most “fashionable neighborhoods of Bogotá and Medellín.” Colombia’s new progressive president has just proposed a wealth tax, on his first day in office no less. In Latin America, the world’s most unequal region, an egalitarian move like that would normally have a nation’s most privileged emigrated and frothing. And some of that frothing certainly is showing up since Gustavo Petro, Colombia’s first left president, proposed his new levy on grand fortunes. A top exec with Colombia’s largest financial conglomerate now even says he sees “a significant risk” the nation’s stock market “will practically disappear” under Petro’s reign.

But Colombia’s rich are, by and large, showing little of such hysteria. Simply put, Colombia’s wealthiest just don’t feel their new president can deliver any real squeeze on their considerable net worths. Petro’s “lack of a congressional majority” and Colombia’s powerful constitutional court and central bank, as the Financial Times has aptly noted, has comfortably informed global investors, will most likely “temper any radical impulses” on the new administration’s part.

The new Petro administration, meanwhile, has ample cause for radicalism. In 2019, the last full pre-pandemic year, no major market-based economy in the world had a higher level of income inequality than Colombia. And Colombia’s inequality has remained remarkably entrenched for generations, mainly because the rich in Colombia have been able to transfer a greater share of their riches to their offspring than the rich of any other nation. One result: Colombia’s top 1% hold an astounding 81% of their society’s private land, well above the 52% Latin American regional average.

Colombia’s tax system does next to nothing to dent this deeply pronounced inequality. Taxes in Colombia, a 2021 World Bank study points out, “do recognize inequality but by very little: 0.5 of one percentage point.”

Colombia’s severe and sustained inequality has nurtured generations of do-nothing—for average people—government. Colombia spends 30% less on social benefits than the Latin American and Caribbean average. Colombian cash-transfer programs and subsidies for gas, water, and electricity, the World Bank adds, also “suffer from large leakages to high-income households.”

In the face of an inequality this deep-seated, Gustavo Petro irritates in his first global media interview after Colombia’s June presidential election, the time has come to “make reforms, not to leave things as they are.” And those reforms, Petro believes, must come quickly. On paper, his presidential term runs four years. In reality, he feels, he has just one to make a difference.

“Reforms are either made the first year,” Petro explains, “or they are not made at all.”

What can Petro reform in his first year? He’s taking a particular aim at Colombia’s tax system. Taxes currently, Petro explains, can claim to be progressive “up to the upper middle class” since the upper-middle class pays more in taxes than the middle class and the middle more than the working class. “But above the upper-middle class lies injustice,” says Petro. “A banker pays proportionally fewer taxes than the secretary in his office. And that cannot be.”

The wealth tax that Petro formally proposed on his first August noted in his first global media interview after Colombia’s June presidential election, the time has come to “make reforms, not to leave things as they are.” And those reforms, Petro believes, must come quickly. On paper, his presidential term runs four years. In reality, he feels, he has just one to make a difference.

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The passing of any of these proposals would rate as historic. In Colombia, as Bogota think-tank economist María Fernanda Valdés observes, “We have never had a reform that was focused on making the people who have the most pay.”

Petro’s proposals now have the attention of the U.S. business press, and ominous-sounding headlines have begun to pulse “on the new administration’s part.”

But Colombia’s rich are, by and large, showing little of such hysteria. Simply put, Colombia’s wealthiest just don’t feel their new president can deliver any real squeeze on their considerable net worths. Petro’s “lack of a congressional majority” and Colombia’s powerful constitutional court and central bank, as the Financial Times has aptly noted, has comfortably informed global investors, will most likely “temper any radical impulses” on the new administration’s part.

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Gustavo Petro and his VP Francia Márquez

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Peace and Planet News • This Is Not A Drill
Puede Una Nación Profundamente Desigual Revertir Totalmente Su Curso?

Por Sam Pizzigati

La recientemente elegida presidenta de Colombia ha propuesto un impuesto a la riqueza, en su primer día en funciones nada menos. En Latinoamérica, la región más desigual del mundo, una medida igualitaria como esa normalmente tendría a los más privilegiados de la nación enfurecida y echando espuma. Y algo de esa espuma se está viendo desde que Gustavo Petro, el primer presidente de izquierda, propuso este nuevo impuesto a las grandes fortunas. Un ejecutivo en las altas esferas de los mayores conglomerados financieros de Colombia ha dicho que el Financial Times a manera de declaración tranqulizante para las inversionistas globales, muy probablemente “templará cualquier impulso radical” de parte de la nueva administración.

La nueva administración de Petro, entretanto, tiene amplias aspiraciones para el radicalismo. En el 2019, el último año antes de la pandemia, ninguna de las mayores economías de mercado del mundo tenía una desigualdad de ingresos mayores que las de Colombia. Y la desigualdad de Colombia ha permanecido notablemente arraigada por generaciones, prueban porque los ricos de Colombia han podido transferir una proporción más grande de su riqueza que cualquier otra nación. Un resultado: el 1% de Colombia posee un extraordinario 81% de las tierras privadas de su sociedad, mucho más arriba que el promedio en Latinoamérica que es 52%.

El sistema tributario de Colombia ha nutrido generaciones de gobernistas que no hacen nada para sus habitantes. Colombia gasta menos del 30% en beneficios sociales que el promedio de Latinoamérica y el Caribe. Los programas de ayuda en efectivo y subsidios para gas, agua, y electricidad, agregó el World Bank, también “sufren de grandes fugas hacia los hogares de altos ingresos.”

En el marco de esta desigualdad tan arraigada, notó Gustavo Petro en su primera entrevista con los medios globales después de la elección presidencial de Junio, ha llegado la hora de “hacer reformas, no dejar las cosas como están.” Y esas reformas, cree Petro, deben llegar rápido. Bajo la ley, su término presidencial es por cuatro años. En realidad, el siente que tiene solo uno para marcar la diferencia. “Las reformas son hechas el primer año” explica Petro, “o ya no se hacen.”

¿Qué puede reformar Petro en su primer año? Su objetivo particular es el sistema de impuestos de Colombia. Actualmente el sistema de impuestos, explica Petro, puede definirse como progresista “hasta la clase media-alta” porque la clase media-alta paga más impuestos que la clase media y la media más que la clase trabajadora. “Pero arriba de la clase media-alta es donde yace la injusticia,” dice Petro. “Un banquero paga proporcionalmente menos impuestos que la secretaria de su oficina. Y eso no puede ser.”

El impuesto a la riqueza que Petro propuso formalmente en su primer día en funciones en agosto, no se parece para nada al “impuesto a la riqueza” que ha existido en el código de impuestos de Colombia por más de una centuria. Este impuesto antiguo corresponde solamente al precio de compra original de activos como acciones, bonos, y bienes raíces, y no tiene en cuenta el valor actual. Para los más ricos de Colombia, el impuesto se considera como máximo una irrisión menor. Como contraste, el impuesto a la riqueza propuesto por Petro, forzaría a los más ricos de Colombia a pagar el 1% anual de todos sus activos personales sobre $1.1 millones, basado en valores actuales de mercado. Activos entre $600,000 y $1.1 millones enfrentarían una contribución de 0.5%.

El impuesto a la riqueza de Petro, como ha sido propuesto, caería solo sobre el 0.02% más rico de la población de Colombia. Un segmento más ancho de los más afluents de Colombia se encontraría con contribuciones de impuestos significativamente más altas si el aumento de impuestos por ganancias propuesto por Petro llega a formularse en ley. Petro también propone un nuevo impuesto a las ganancias extraordinarias para las corporaciones.

El 1% de Colombia posee un extraordinario 81% de las tierras privadas de su sociedad, mucho más arriba que el promedio en Latinoamérica que es 5%.

El impuesto a la riqueza que Petro propuso formalmente en su primer día en funciones en agosto, no se parece para nada al “impuesto a la riqueza” que ha existido en el código de impuestos de Colombia por más de una centuria. Este impuesto antiguo corresponde solamente al precio de compra original de activos como acciones, bonos, y bienes raíces, y no tiene en cuenta el valor actual. Para los más ricos de Colombia, el impuesto se considera como máximo una irrisión menor. Como contraste, el impuesto a la riqueza propuesto por Petro, forzaría a los más ricos de Colombia a pagar el 1%
The War on Indigenous Women

The article below, written about a 2019 women's gathering, highlights issues and organizing strategies that we believe are still critical today.—The editors.

By Laura Carlson

When 4,000 women from around the world met in a Zapatista community in 2019 to find ways to end violence against women, we knew what we were up against. Many, if not most, brought with them the scars of gender violence. We also knew we were meeting at a critical and contradictory point in the history of women's movements—a point when an all-time high in public attention and mobilization coincided with a rise in the violence the movements aim to stop.

The second gathering of “Women Who Struggle” faced two big questions: how do we take personal pain and forge it into collective action, and what do we need to be doing differently to reduce a form of violence that has proved to be not only intransigent, but resilient?

The first day, scores of women stood up to a microphone on a wooden platform to describe the abuses they'd suffered, and the paths they built, collectively, to free and heal themselves. Their stories demonstrated the degree to which violence against girls and women permeates society and how it has been normalized through socially accepted practices that isolate the victims and their pain. Each woman who spoke through her tears was met with a cry of “you are not alone!”

The second day participants broke into groups to discuss strategies to deal with the frustrating truth that after decades of identifying, legislating, and organizing around violence against women, we are no closer to eradicating it. In most of our countries, feminicides—the murder of a woman for being a woman—have gone up. In El Salvador, murders of women more than doubled between 2013 and 2017, with Honduras and Guatemala close behind. Mexico faces an epidemic in violence against women. The United Nations reports that nine women are killed every day, and the Mexican Institute of Statistics and Geography found that 44% of women have suffered violence from a partner and 66% have experienced some form of violence. The statistics don’t even reflect the full extent of the problem, since many cases aren’t reported. Most of the testimonies presented at the Zapatista meeting described a process of years, if not decades, to dare to speak about the attacks. In many legal systems, women who were attacked in childhood can’t report the crime later due to statutes of limitations. The stories of the abuse of women as little girls were the hardest to listen to.

The testimonies also bore out how discrimination, racism, homophobia, and poverty compound the risk. Native American women in the United States face a murder rate more than 10 times the national average. Undocumented migrant women are increasingly afraid to report violence for fear of deportation, putting them at far greater risk and allowing situations of domestic violence to escalate.

Attacks against members of the LGBTQ community have become particularly common and vicious, and women workers face systematic violence that often includes economic blackmail.

At the same time, feminist movements have made great strides in raising the issue. From the MeToo movements that publicly denounce sexual abuse and harassment to the Chilean women’s viral performance of “A rapist in your path” to demonstrations throughout the world, and the wave of student strikes and school occupations against gender violence in Mexico, a new generation of feminists was leading organizing to reclaim the right to live without fear, injecting a new anger and urgency in women’s movements, as well as new tensions and challenges.

The inauguration speech of the Zapatista Comandanta Amada, reflected the frustrations of this paradox. “They say there’s been a lot of progress in feminist struggles, but they continue to kill us. They say that women are now taken into account, but they continue to kill us. They say there are now more laws that protect women, but they continue to kill us …” she told the crowd. She criticized apparent progress on many women’s issues—

Studies in Mexico and Central American countries where the United States exports massive amounts of firearms also show the lethal link between guns and femicide.

Anarchism in Action: The Zapatista Movement.

The Revolutionary Zapatista Murals of Oventic Mexico. Photo: Dane Strom

The War on Indigenous Women

continued on page 13…
Tell Biden: It’s been long enough!

Remove Cuba from the Infamous State Sponsors of Terrorism List

By Medea Benjamin and Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan

As Cubans celebrated the July 26 Day of the National Rebellion—a public holiday commemorating the 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks that is considered the precursor to the 1959 revolution—U.S. groups were calling on the Biden administration to stop its cruel sanctions that are creating such hardship for the Cuban people. In particular, they are pushing President Biden to take Cuba off the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Being on this list subjects Cuba to a series of devastating international financial restrictions. It is illegal for U.S. banks to process transactions to Cuba, but U.S. sanctions also have an unlawful extra-territorial reach. Fearful of getting in the crosshairs of U.S. regulations, most Western banks have also stopped processing transactions involving Cuba or have implemented new layers of compliance. This has hampered everything from imports to humanitarian aid to development assistance, and has sparked a new European campaign to challenge their banks’ compliance with U.S. sanctions.

These banking restrictions and Trump-era sanctions, together with the economic fallout from COVID-19, have led to a severe humanitarian and economic crisis for the very Cuban people the administration claims to support. They are also a major cause of the recent increase in migration of Cubans that has become a major political liability for the Biden administration.

If anything, it is Cuba that has been the victim of international terrorism emanating mainly from the United States.

At the beginning of Biden’s presidency, he stated that Cuba’s designation on this list was under review. Eighteen months later, with the administration obviously more concerned about Florida politics than the welfare of the Cuban people, the results of this review have still not been revealed. Cuba remains on the list, with no justification and despite Biden hailing diplomacy—not escalation of tension and conflict—as his administration’s preferred path.

During the Obama Administration, when there was a warming of bilateral relations with Cuba, the Obama-Biden White House undertook its own review and certified that the government of Cuba was not supporting terrorism and had provided the United States with assurances that it would not do so in the future. As a result, Cuba was taken off the infamous list.

When Donald Trump became president, he not only imposed over 200 new, harsh sanctions on the island, but in the last days of his administration, in a final move to curry favor with anti-normalization Cuban-Americans, he added Cuba back onto this list. The only other countries with this designation are Syria, Iran, and North Korea.

The addition of Cuba to the list by then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo curtailed a process of congressional consultation and avoided conducting any actual formal review of Cuba’s supposed actions to justify its addition to the list again.

The nonsensical rationale by Pompeo to add Cuba back to the list was that Cuba was granting safe harbor to Colombian terrorists. But these Colombian groups were ... part of an internationally recognized process of peace negotiations that the United States, Norway, Colombia and even Pope Francis supported.

Trump specifically cited Cuba’s requested to extradite ten members of the ELN (National Liberation Army), as requested during Colombia’s Ivan Duque administration. However, Cuba was under no obligation to extradite anyone as they have no extradition treaty with the United States, nor is the failure to extradite someone based solely on U.S. desires an act of “terrorism.” In addition, Colombia’s constitution states that “extradition shall not be granted for a political crime.” Moreover, Gustavo Petro, a former member of another rebel group called M-19, has been inaugurated as president of Colombia. He has said to the ELN and all existing armed groups that “the time for peace has come”—a message the Biden administration should embrace.

The other reason stated by the Trump administration for adding Cuba to the list is that Cuba harbors U.S. fugitives from justice. The 2020 State Department report cited three cases, all involving incidents that occurred in the early 1970s. The most famous is the case of Assata Shakur (born Joanne Chesimard), who has become an icon of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Shakur, now 75 years old, was a member of the Black Liberation Army. In a trial that many deemed unfair, she was convicted of killing a state trooper when, in 1973, the car she was traveling in was stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike for a broken tail light. Shakur escaped from prison and was granted political asylum in Cuba. Fidel Castro called her a victim of “the fierce repression against the Black movement in the United States” and “a true political prisoner.”

Her co-defendant Sundiata Acoli, now in his mid-80s, was granted parole this year. Given how old the claims are and that these considerations were already previously reviewed by the Obama-Biden administration and not found to be sufficient to justify designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, it’s certainly time for the Biden administration to remember that and bury the hatchet.

In any case, U.S. attorney Robert Muse continues on page 10 …
The Long U.S. History of Military Meddling

The U.S. has launched 251 armed interventions since 1991, and 469 since 1798

By Benjamin Norton

The United States launched at least 251 military interventions between 1991 and 2022 according to the Congressional Research Service, a government institution that compiles information on behalf of Congress.

The report documented another 218 U.S. military interventions between 1798 and 1990.

This data was published on March 8, 2022, by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), in a document titled “Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798–2022.” The list of countries targeted by the U.S. military includes the vast majority of the nations on Earth, including almost every single county in Latin America and the Caribbean and most of the African continent.

From the beginning of 1991 to the beginning of 2004, the U.S. military launched 100 interventions, according to CRS. That number grew to 200 military interventions between 1991 and 2018.

The report shows that, since the end of the first cold war in 1991, at the moment of U.S. unipolar hegemony, the number of Washington’s military interventions abroad substantially increased.

The list of countries targeted by the U.S. military includes the vast majority of the nations on Earth, including almost every single county in Latin America and the Caribbean and most of the African continent.

Of the total 469 documented foreign military interventions, the Congressional Research Service noted that the U.S. government only formally declared war 11 times, in just five separate wars.

The data exclude the independence war been U.S. settlers and the British empire, any military deployments between 1776 and 1978, and the U.S. Civil War.

It is important to stress that these conservative estimates, because they do not include U.S. special operations, covert actions, or domestic deployments.

The CRS report clarified: “The list does not include covert actions or numerous occurrences in which U.S. forces have been stationed abroad since World War II in occupation forces or for participation in mutual security organizations, base agreements, or routine military assistance or training operations.”

The report likewise excludes the deployment of U.S. military forces against Indigenous peoples, when they were systematically ethnically cleansed in the violent process of westward settler-colonial expansion.

CRS acknowledged that it left out the “continual use of U.S. military units in the exploration, settlement, and pacification of the western part of the United States.”

The Military Intervention Project at Tufts University’s Center for Strategic Studies has documented even more foreign meddling.

“U.S. has undertaken over 500 international military interventions since 1776, with nearly 60% undertaken between 1950 and 2017,” the project wrote. “What’s more, over one-third of these missions occurred after 1990.”

Cuba... continued from page 9

insists that providing asylum to U.S. citizens does not justify putting Cuba on a terrorist list. U.S. law defines international terrorism as “acts involving the citizens or the territory of more than one country.” None of the U.S. citizens residing in Cuba committed a terrorist act that was international in nature.

Using this terrorist list for purely political reasons undermines the legitimacy of the terrorism designation itself. As Sen. Patrick Leahy said, “This blatantly politicized designation makes a mockery of what had been a credible, objective measure of a foreign government’s active support for terrorism. Nothing remotely like that exists [in Cuba].” On the contrary, Cuba has often been praised for its international cooperation and solidarity, especially in providing free or low-cost healthcare and medical support to poor countries worldwide, including throughout the global pandemic.

If anything, it is Cuba that has been the victim of international terrorism emanating mainly from the United States. This ranges from the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and hundreds of assassination attempts against Fidel Castro to the downing of a Cuban civilian airplane (while the United States provided actual cover to the terrorist, who lived out his life peacefully in Miami) and the bombing of Cuban hotels. Just last April, the Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C., came under an armed attack by a U.S. citizen. The United States continues to provide millions of dollars in taxpayer funding every year to organizations engaged in defamation and smear campaigns, and to directly undermine the sovereignty of another government with little to no oversight.

Removing Cuba from the terrorist list would facilitate the island’s ability to receive loans, access critical foreign assistance and benefit from humanitarian aid. You can join the campaign to tell Biden to reverse the outrageous Trump-era designation that is unjust, harmful to the Cuban people, and damaging to U.S.-Cuba relations at codepink.org/cuba-no-terror.


![A map of countries where the United States has militarily intervened](Source: Congressional Research Service)
O n the morning of Sept. 21, 1976, a car bomb took the lives of Orlando Letelier, minister of Foreign Relations and ambassador to the United States under Chile’s socialist President Salvador Allende (1970–1973), and Ronni Karpen Moffitt, a 25-year-old fundraiser for the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), a left-wing think-tank in Washington, D.C.

The Chevrolet Malibu in which they were traveling exploded near Sheridan Row. Ronni’s husband Michael survived the bombing with minor wounds, cursing the “fascists” who had killed Letelier and his young wife.

Two years after the bombing, the U.S. Justice Department prosecuted nine co-conspirators, including five Cuban Americans associated with the right-wing Anti-Castro movement, along with an American expatriate living in Chile, Michael Vernon Townley, an explosives expert and right-wing terrorist born in 1942 in Waterloo, Iowa, who worked for the Chilean security services (DINA) and CIA.

Townley wound up accepting a plea bargain that limited his sentence to 10 years (he only served five before being freed in the Witness Protection program). According to Letelier, the day after the coup, he was taken out of his jail cell and taken to the military barracks, where he was left to chance and ultimately sentenced to a maximum of 20 years in prison.

The Swedish Ambassador to Chile at the time, Harald Edelstam, who helped hundreds escape persecution, estimated that 10,000–15,000 people were killed in the first three months after the coup as the Chilean military had orders to kill anyone who resisted.

Among those who were detained and narrowly escaped death at Dawson Island concentration camp was Letelier, a lawyer and economist who had started his career working in Chile’s Department of Copper when he developed his support for Allende’s nationalization policy. The Victims of Operation Condor

According to Letelier, the day after the coup, he was taken out of his jail cell blindfolded before a firing squad, though one of the sergeants yelled “Halt!” and his life was spared—temporarily.

After his release to Venezuela, Letelier moved to Washington, D.C., to work for IPS, where he developed a study of U.S.-Chilean relations during the Allende years and began to plan for a resistance movement to General Pinochet with other exiled Chilean Socialist Party leaders.

DINA’s assassination campaign was part of Operation Condor—a CIA-driven effort modeled after the Phoenix Program in Vietnam in which Southern Cone intelligence services coordinated their efforts to hunt down leftwing dissidents, including civilian politicians.

The U.S. government provided crucial support for Operation Condor through police training programs and the establishment of blacklists and a communications infrastructure based in the Panama Canal Zone, as well as the political backing of U.S. officials, chief among them former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

In September 1974, in a prelude to the assassination of Letelier, Michael Townley built a car bomb to assassinate General Morales. The Colonel

By Carolyn Forché - 1950

WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD is true. I was in his house. His wife carried a tray of coffee and sugar. His daughter filed her nails, his son went out for the night. There were daily papers, pet dogs, a pistol on the cushion beside him. The moon swung bare on its black cord over the house. On the television was a cop show. It was in English. Broken bottles were embedded in the walls around the house to scoop the kneecaps from a man’s legs or cut his hands to lace. On the windows there were gratings like those in liquor stores. We had dinner, rack of lamb, good wine, a gold bell was on the table for calling the maid. The maid brought green mangoes, salt, a type of bread. I was asked how I enjoyed the country. There was a brief commercial in Spanish. His wife took everything away. There was some talk then of how difficult it had become to govern. The parrot said hello on the terrace. The colonel told it to shut up, and pushed himself from the table. My friend said to me with his eyes: say nothing. The colonel returned with a sack used to bring groceries home. He spilled many human ears on the table. They were like dried peach halves. There is no other way to say this. He took one of them in his hands, shook it in our faces, dropped it into a water glass. It came alive there. I am tired of fooling around he said. As for the rights of anyone, tell your people they can go fuck themselves. He swept the ears to the floor with his arm and held the last of his wine in the air. Something for your poetry, no? he said. Some of the ears on the floor caught this scrap of his voice. Some of the ears on the floor were gratings like those in liquor stores.
Roger Waters

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wreath to honor him, and all the other fallen. Losing my father before I ever knew him and being brought up by a single, working mother who fought tirelessly for equality and justice colored my life in far-reaching ways and has driven all my work. And, at this point in my journey, I like to think that I pay tribute to both my parents every time I speak out in support of any beleaguered people denied the freedom and justice that I believe all of us deserve.

After visiting Israel in 2005 and the West Bank the following year, I was deeply moved and concerned by what I saw, and determined to add my voice to those searching for an equitable and lawful solution to the problem—for both Palestinians and Jews. Given my upbringing, I really had no choice. In 2005, Palestinian civil society appealed to people of conscience all over the world to act where governments had failed. They asked us to join their non-violent movement—for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)—which aims to end Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories, to secure equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel, and to uphold the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the cities and villages they were violently forced out of in 1948 and 1967.

After more than two decades of negotiations, the vulnerable Palestinian population still lives under occupation, while more land is taken, more illegal settlements built, more Palestinians, refugees, to targeted violence, from all sides in that bloody conflict, subject to unimaginable hardship and deprivation and, in many cases, particularly for the vulnerable young, to starvation.

What can we all do to advance the rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories, Israel and the diaspora? Well, BDS is a nonviolent, citizen-led movement that is founded on universal principles of human rights for all people. All people! In consequence, I have determined that the BDS approach is one I can fully support.

I feel honored to stand in solidarity alongside my father and my mother, and alongside my Palestinian brothers and sisters, and so many others of all colors, faiths and circumstances from all over the world—including an ever-increasing number of courageous Jewish Americans and Israelis—who have also answered the call. In the furor that exists in the U.S. today about BDS, the right and wrong of a cultural boycott of Israel, a quote from one of my heroes, Mahatma Gandhi, has been on my mind. He prophetically said, “First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.”

I have always had a profound respect for Gandhi’s philosophy, and his AIPAC fulminations in the vanguard, has risen exponentially. I think it’s safe to say BDS is in the “then they fight you” stage.

Some wrongly portray the boycott movement, which is modeled on the boycotts employed against Apartheid South Africa and used in the U.S. civil rights movement, to be an attack on the Israeli people or even on the Jewish people, as a whole. Nothing could be further from the truth. The movement recognizes universal human rights under the law for all people, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or color.

I do not claim to speak on behalf of the BDS movement, yet, as a vocal supporter, and because of my visibility in the music industry, I have become a natural target for those who wish to attack BDS, not by addressing the merits of its claims but, instead, by assigning hateful and racist motivations to BDS supporters like me. It has even been said, cruelly and wrongly, that I am a Nazi and an anti-Semite.

I believe that the root of all injustice and oppression has always been the same—the dehumanization of the other. It is the obsession with Us and Them that can lead us, regardless of racial or religious identity, into the abyss.

When I remarked in a recent interview on historical parallels, stating that I would not have played Vichy France or Berlin in World War II, it was not my intention to compare the Israelis to Nazis or the Holocaust to the decades-long oppression of the Palestinians. There is no comparison to the Holocaust. Nor did I intend or ever wish to compare the suffering of Jews then with the suffering of Palestinians now. Comparing suffering is a painful, grotesque and diminishing exercise that dishonors the specific memory of all our fallen loved ones.

I believe that the root of all injustice and oppression has always been the same—the dehumanization of the other. It is the obsession with Us and Them that can lead us, regardless of racial or religious identity, into the abyss.

Let us never forget that oppression begets more oppression, and the tree of fear and bigotry bears only bitter fruit. The end of the occupation of Palestine, should we all manage to secure it, will mean freedom for the occupied and the occupiers and freedom from the bitter taste of all those wasted years and lives. And that will be a great gift to the world. “Ashes and diamonds

Foe and friend

We were all equal

In the end.”

Roger Waters is an internationally recognized and respected musician and social justice activist. He is embarking on a North American concert tour called This Is Not a Drill. More information at rogerwaters.com.

The Gunners Dream

By Roger Waters

Floating down, through the clouds
Memories come rushing up to meet me now
But in the space between the heavens
And the corner of some foreign field
I had a dream
I had a dream
Goodbye Max, goodbye Ma
After the service, when you’re walking slowly to the car
And the silver in her hair shines in the cold November air
You hear the tolling bell and touch the silk in your lapel
And as the teardrops rise to meet the comfort of the band
You take her frail hand
And hold on to the dream
A place to stay, enough to eat

Somewhere, old heroes shuffle safely down the street
Where you can speak out loud about your doubts and fears
And what’s more, no one ever disappears
You never hear their standard issue kicking in
You can relax on both sides of the tracks
And maniacs don’t blow holes in bandsmen by remote control
And everyone has recourse to the law
And no one kills the children anymore
No one kills the children anymore
Night after night, going ‘round and ‘round my brain
His dream is driving me insane
In the corner of some foreign field
The gunner sleeps tonight
What’s done is done
We cannot just write off his final scene
Take heed of the dream
Take heed

Veterans For Peace at a demonstration in Bil’in, Palestine. Photo: Ellen Davidson

peaceandplanetnews.org • This Is Not a Drill

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for open discussion about the differences. Comandanta Amada ended with an admonishment that must be taken to heart: “If we don’t let geographies divide us, then let’s not let calendars divide us either.”

During the discussions and in the speeches almost nobody talked about the government’s role in ending violence against women, except to say that it has failed. This is interesting, considering that women’s movements have invested a great deal of time, effort and resources into drafting and passing legislation, improving justice systems, putting abusers behind bars and creating governmental protection mechanisms and programs. The results have been alarmingly bad.

Even programs that seem to have worked prove to be vulnerable and too often ephemeral. Take the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in the United States. The act has been credited with reducing domestic violence by 60% and yet the Republican Senate refused to renew it because the House passed a strengthened version that broadened a prohibition on the sale of firearms to those convicted of domestic violence. U.S. studies show women are five times more likely to be murdered by men if there is a gun in the house. Similar studies in Mexico and Central American countries where the United States exports massive amounts of firearms also show the lethal link between guns and femicide. But apparently, the political clout of the National Rifle Association trumps women’s lives.

Where rightwing governments come to power—Trump in the United States and Bolsonaro in Brazil come to mind—hard-won protections for women are rolled back at mind-boggling speed. Even progressive governments—like Mexico’s under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has declared “the end of neoliberalism”—are putting women’s rights and safety on the historical back burner.

So it’s no wonder that proposals from the gathering focused on women’s grassroots organizing and collective self-protection. While groups of women practiced self-defense training in the community soccer field, others discussed their work in accompanying women who have to take routes known to be dangerous, creating “safe spaces,” publicly denouncing abusers where impunity reigns, forming brigades to search for women who have been forcibly disappeared, adopting security protocols in their organizations, creating victims’ support groups and popular education groups, providing translators for indigenous women, defending migrant women on route, setting up counseling services and all kinds of creative therapies, visiting women in prison and providing re-entry services, campaigns for women tourists to prevent abuse and assault in resort areas, performances and street art to raise consciousness, networks of women human rights defenders, fighting for access to land for economic security for rural women, building shelters, sharing basic necessities and creating an infinitely wide range of ground-up initiatives.

In general, the idea is to build feminist caring communities that don’t necessarily give up on law enforcement, but take matters into their own hands. For many, the state has lost all credibility as a guarantor of basic safety for women. Many groups continue to document and denounce abuses, while at the same time protecting and providing among themselves.

Today’s movement aims not only to “take back the streets,” but to take back every nook and cranny where women live their lives. To spend three days in an encampment of thousands of women committed to ending violence—without men, without fear—provided an exhilarating glimpse of the freedom we want.

Because, as feminists, we know that those battles for nooks and crannies are precisely where real transformation is born.

Laura Carlsten is the director of the Americas Program in Mexico City and advisor to Just Associates (JASS).

Ronni Moffit

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Carlos Prats, Pinochet’s predecessor as chief of the Chilean Armed Forces and an Allende loyalist who had the potential to lead a progressive-military coalition to overthrow Pinochet,

Letelier was the next target because he had been a effective in cultivating alliances with Democratic Party senators and in lobbying for the cut-off of U.S. military aid to Chile; b) had helped initiate a Dutch embargo of Chilean products; c) had denounced Pinochet’s atrocities at a large rally in Madison Square Garden; and d) was working to develop plans for a new world economy that would undercut the power of large corporations.

The U.S. government was complicit in Letelier’s murder because of the Nixon and Ford Administrations’ strong support for General Pinochet’s regime and covert support for the deadly Operation Condor, of which Letelier’s murder was a part.

The same year that Letelier was assassinated, Pinochet had personally complained to then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger about Letelier’s activities, in a conversation in which Kissinger assured the dictator that “we are sympathetic with what you are trying to do.”

Michael Townley had learned explosives skills from Frank Sturgis and CIA experts in Miami, and worked in MI5 in an effort to block Al Lelden’s election in 1970. The CIA not only trained the main culprits, but also

have to take routes known to be dangerous, creating “safe spaces,” publicly denouncing abusers where impunity reigns, forming brigades to search for women who have been forcibly disappeared, adopting security protocols in their organizations, creating victims’ support groups and popular education groups, providing translators for indigenous women, defending migrant women on route, setting up counseling services and all kinds of creative therapies, visiting women in prison and providing re-entry services, campaigns for women tourists to prevent abuse and assault in resort areas, performances and street art to raise consciousness, networks of women human rights defenders, fighting for access to land for economic security for rural women, building shelters, sharing basic necessities and creating an infinitely wide range of ground-up initiatives.

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U.S. support for fascist regimes abroad … resulted in a huge spike in international terrorism that extended to the United States itself.

region, while socialist governments have survived recent CIA-backed coup attempts in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Bolivia.

Chile is currently governed, meanwhile, by a young left-leaning president, Gabriel Boric, who has repudiated not only Pinochet but also the Chicago Boys, saying that, “if Chile was the cradle of neoliberalism, it will also be its grave.”

This would have been music to the ears of Orlando Letelier, whose struggle for a more just economic order ended with an admonishment that must be taken to heart: “If we don’t let geographies divide us, then let’s not let calendars divide us either.”

During the discussions and in the speeches almost nobody talked about the government’s role in ending violence against women, except to say that it has failed. This is interesting, considering that women’s movements have invested a great deal of time, effort and resources into drafting and passing legislation, improving justice systems, putting abusers behind bars and creating governmental protection mechanisms and programs. The results have been alarmingly bad.

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Where rightwing governments come to power—Trump in the United States and Bolsonaro in Brazil come to mind—hard-won protections for women are rolled back at mind-boggling speed. Even progressive governments—like Mexico’s under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has declared “the end of neoliberalism”—are putting women’s rights and safety on the historical back burner.

So it’s no wonder that proposals from the gathering focused on women’s grassroots organizing and collective self-protection. While groups of women practiced self-defense training in the community soccer field, others discussed their work in accompanying women who have to take routes known to be dangerous, creating “safe spaces,” publicly denouncing abusers where impunity reigns, forming brigades to search for women who have been forcibly disappeared, adopting security protocols in their organizations, creating victims’ support groups and popular education groups, providing translators for indigenous women, defending migrant women on route, setting up counseling services and all kinds of creative therapies, visiting women in prison and providing re-entry services, campaigns for women tourists to prevent abuse and assault in resort areas, performances and street art to raise consciousness, networks of women human rights defenders, fighting for access to land for economic security for rural women, building shelters, sharing basic necessities and creating an infinitely wide range of ground-up initiatives.

In general, the idea is to build feminist caring communities that don’t necessarily give up on law enforcement, but take matters into their own hands. For many, the state has lost all credibility as a guarantor of basic safety for women. Many groups continue to document and denounce abuses, while at the same time protecting and providing among themselves.

Today’s movement aims not only to “take back the streets,” but to take back every nook and cranny where women live their lives. To spend three days in an encampment of thousands of women committed to ending violence—without men, without fear—provided an exhilarating glimpse of the freedom we want.

Because, as feminists, we know that those battles for nooks and crannies are precisely where real transformation is born.

Laura Carlsten is the director of the Americas Program in Mexico City and advisor to Just Associates (JASS).
Stopping the Guns that Destroy Lives in Mexico

By John Lindsay-Poland

The uncontrolled flow of guns from the United States to Mexico is a root cause of the high levels of murders, extortion, forced migration, and other kinds of violence that assault Mexico and the region. But we can do something to put a halt to this deadly commerce.

The violence has numerous sources: the “war on drugs,” the extortion business, trafficking in people, toxic masculinity, political repression and more, but the thread running through them all is the huge number of U.S.-sourced firearms. The availability of so many weapons complicates Mexico’s path to resolving its most urgent challenges. Easy access to firearms reinforces the power of criminal organizations and of corrupt military and police officers, both dependent on the continuing flow of weapons.

The U.S. gun market is enormous, militarized, and permissive, with thousands of gun shops in border states such as Texas, Arizona, and California. In Mexico, on the other hand, the legal purchase of guns is very restricted, with a single gun shop operated by the army.

At least 70% of all guns recovered in Mexico and traced come from the United States. The open sale of assault weapons and sniper rifles represents an obvious source of arms for organizations that use violence in Mexico to control and fight over markets for drugs, extortion and fees for the passage of migrants seeking asylum. An estimated 250,000 guns are trafficked illegally over the border from the United States into Mexico each year.

The results are clear: An exponential increase in homicide in Mexico. Gun possession in homes with growing violence and coercion against women. Enormous power of both criminal groups and military agencies that rely on weapons. Displaced communities and migrants seeking refuge, who encounter state agents armed to the teeth running through them all is the huge number of U.S.-sourced firearms. The availability of so many weapons complicates Mexico’s path to resolving its most urgent challenges. Easy access to firearms reinforces the power of criminal organizations and of corrupt military and police officers, both dependent on the continuing flow of weapons.

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Some people believe that if they get their own gun, they can defend themselves against all the violence. But many studies show that a firearm in the home is much more likely to be used against someone inside the house than against any attacker. In addition, with people increasingly armed with guns, a kind of arms race is set off that ends up in more violence. The only language for communicating one’s discontent or in conflicts becomes the language of weapons.

The Mexican government’s lawsuit filed last year against 11 U.S. gun companies for negligent practices that promote illegal trafficking of these weapons is an important step. It puts the onus on those who are making profits from the weapons used in so much violence. But it is not enough.

Weapons from the United States and other countries also flow to police and military forces that have committed atrocities, including police in Guerrero state who forcibly disappeared 43 students from Ayotzinapa and murdered six more, using assault rifles imported from the United States, Germany, and Italy. State police in the northern state of Tamaulipas have acquired hundreds of rifles imported from the United States via the Mexican army (SEDENA), both before and after massacres committed by those police in 2019 and 2021. Neither the United States nor SEDENA stop deadly weapons from going to such police, nor do they condition weapons transfers on holding accountable police who are implicated in serious crimes.

In Mexico, almost all authority for firearms lives in a single agency: the army. By contrast, in the United States, where the army is responsible for practically every process related to firearms at the national level, including their production, importation, registration, licenses to carry, sale—to police, individuals and private security companies—and destruction. Soldiers also deploy firearms in operations and recover a large part of crime guns in the country.

SEDENA’s monopoly on firearms in Mexico has serious consequences for civilian control of guns, transparency, and access to information. SEDENA does not limit the sale of weapons to police that evidence shows are used to commit serious human right violations, and the number of crime guns recovered by SEDENA has actually fallen in the last 10 years.

The lack of controls on munitions and gun parts is a worldwide problem. Mexico has important reasons to control and reduce this traffic that generates so much violence in the country, among other things. To that end, Mexico should also take action to make transparent the production and export within the country of parts that are essential to fire weapons and destroy lives.

What Can Be Done?

Communities in Mexico and the United States need to take an active role in furthering the violence. The future of both countries and our movements for social and environmental justice are inevitably linked.

More than 40 grassroots organizations from across Mexico and the United States are organizing a Peace Summit in February 2023 to strengthen and make visible civil society’s demands, especially those that have been excluded and marginalized. The peace summit will bring together communities, and others—on human rights, justice, democracy and peace in the region.

Within Mexico, #PazSinArms is a new coalition of Mexican human rights, feminist, religious, and academic groups.

For more information on the Peace Summit, see: peaceus2023.org. For bilingual information on U.S. guns in Mexico, visit stopgunsinmexico.org

To join #PazSinArms, please scan the QR code at left.

John Lindsay-Poland coordinates Stopp U.S. Arms to Mexico, a project of Global Exchange; you can email him at johnlindsaypoland@gmail.com.

Berta Cáceres’ Murderer Trained by the U.S.

On June 20, 2022, a Honduran court finally presented the written verdict in the case against U.S.-trained former military intelligence officer Roberto David Castillo for the murder of Berta Cáceres, sentencing him to 22 years and 6 months in prison. Laura Zúñiga Cáceres, Berta’s eldest daughter explained, “This is an important advance but the masterminds of the crime are still en –

The article reports that one of these companies, despite the fact that the first murder was requested by Atala Midence on Feb. 23, 2016, and sent just two days before the trial made it clear there were several cor –

Berta Cáceres’ family’s lawyers but avoided testifying after state prosecutors stated he was under investigation for the murder. While he may techni –

Indeed, it seems the Honduran Public Prosecutor’s Office has attempted to avoid finding intellectual authors responsible for the murder of Berta Cáceres. The Public Prosecutor’s Office has notably failed to present evidence about where the money to pay for Cáceres’ murder came from. They did not even present a proposal to the court to have a financial expert examine the fi –

The article reports that one of these payments, for just over $1.7 million, was requested by Atala Midence on Feb. 23, 2016, and sent just two days before Cáceres was murdered. Also two days be –

Community organizations of Honduras], and the COPINH [Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras]...
Alto a las Armas que Destruyen Vidas en México

Por John Lindsay-Poland

El flujo descontrolado de armas de Estados Unidos a México es una causa de altos niveles de homicidios, extorsiones, la migración forzada y otros tipos de violencia que azotan el país y la región. Sin embargo, hay cosas que podemos hacer para frenar este tráfico mortal.

Las fuentes de violencia son múltiples: la guerra contra las drogas, la industria de la extorsión, la trata de personas, la masacridad, la represión política y otras causas más, pero el hilo que cruza todo esto es la gran cantidad de armas de origen estadounidense. La disponibilidad y fácil acceso a tantas armas complica el camino de México para resolver sus desafíos más urgentes y refuerza el poder de las organizaciones criminales y de los funcionarios de seguridad corruptos, ambas dependientes de la continuidad del flujo de estas armas.

El mercado de armas en Estados Unidos es enorme, militarizado y permissivo, con miles de armerías en los estados fronterizos como Texas, Arizona y California. En México, por otra parte, la compra legal de armas de fuego es muy restringida, en una sola tienda operado por el ejército. Por lo menos setenta por ciento de todas las armas aseguradas en México y trazadas vienen de Estados Unidos. La venta libre de armas de asalto y para francotiradores representa una oferta obvia para organizaciones que utilizan la violencia en México para controlar y disputar mercados de drogas, extorsión y cuotas para el paso de migrantes buscando asilo. Se estima que 250,000 armas de fuego pasan de Estados Unidos ilegalmente por la frontera a México cada año.

Los resultados son evidentes: Crecimiento exponencial de asesinatos en México. Tenencia de armas en hogares donde la violencia y coerción contra mujeres avanza. Poder enorme tanto de organizaciones criminales como de instituciones militares que dependen de las armas. Comunidades desplazadas, migrantes buscando refugio que enfrentan agentes estatales armados con pistolas de Estados Unidos que los dejan libres de criminalidades armadas que los extorsionan y hasta hacen aparición. Como en el caso de cartas indígenas luchando por control territorial. Familias y comunidades destrozadas.

Algunas personas creen que, si compran su propia arma, pueden defendérse contra la violencia. Pero sobran estudios que muestran que, con un arma de fuego en el hogar, es mucho, mucho más probable que esa arma se utilice en contra de alguien dentro de la casa que en contra de un atacante. Además, con cada vez más gente armada, un tipo de carrera armamentista despega que también resulta más en violencia. El único lenguaje para comunicar en conflictos o del descontento propio llega a ser el del arma.

La demanda judicial del Gobierno de Estados Unidos contra 11 empresas que fabrican armas en México es un problema mundial. México tiene motivos profundos para controlar y reducir ese comercio que, entre otras cosas, produce tanta violencia en México para controlar y disputar mercados de drogas, extorsiones y cuotas para el paso de migrantes buscando asilo.

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A Strange Convergence

By Eric Maddox

Prior to spending nearly two years on the US-Mexico border, interviewing sex workers in cd. Juárez, priests and human rights workers in New Mexico and Arizona, and retired law enforcement I spent almost a year in Dheisheh Refugee Camp in Bethlehem in 2007-08. At the invitation of a Palestinian friend and resident of the camp I travelled to Palestine to complete graduate research in Conflict Transformation. I arrived with many questions and with a mainstream peacenik perspective. I believed the talking points: “both sides need to soften their approaches,” “violence is never justified,” “we need to create more space for talks,” etc. However, seeing the reality on the ground in the West Bank (and several years later in Gaza as well), I understood what was meant by the Howard Zinn quote, “you can’t be neutral on a moving train.”

The graduate work focused on collecting oral histories from combatants and survivors on both sides of the 1948 war. What shocked me into reality on the way to conduct interviews in the West Bank and Israel proper, was a series of arbitrary checkpoints, dehumanizing cattle gates, heavily armed occupation soldiers, colonial settlements, armed settlers, Jews-only roads, and giving the ground cutting through the villages and even families. It became evident that the pretense of endless “talks” was being used as a cover for the colonization and cultural genocide of an indigenous population, and that it was being funded with $3.8 billion a year of US tax money.

Talking to Israeli civilians in Tel Aviv nightlife and with Israeli soldiers occupying the streets of Hebron I often found myself having the same conversations. “Be careful of the Arabs, they will attack you when you aren’t looking. Stay with us where you are safe.” When I informed Israelis that I was in fact living in a refugee camp in the West Bank, or that I had been invited for a tour up the street in Hebron, I could see the inability to compute that with the dominant narrative the Israeli media, politicians, and school system had fed them. In many ways, Tel Aviv might as well be as far away from Gaza or the West Bank as Los Angeles, given the profound ignorance of its inhabitants had about the lived realities of Palestinians just a few minutes away.

At many points during my time in Palestine I was confronted with the realities of US imperialism, but one day after making a remark about the obvious monument to injustice that is the Israeli Apartheid Wall, I was asked a very simple question: “Don’t you guys have a wall too, with Mexico?”

Having spent the majority of my life living in California and New Mexico I was immediately struck by my near total ignorance of the parallel reality that had just been pointed out to me, and when I returned to the United States it continued to be a source of shame and curiosity until I managed to win a modest award from the New Mexico State Film Office to complete a project on the US-Mexico Border. Between 2009 and 2011 every free moment was used to travel along the U.S. wall, from Arizona to West Texas. The Secure Fences Act of 2006, a machination of the G. W. Bush Administration, and the origins of the edifice on the U.S.-Mexico Border, had received votes from then-U.S. Senators Clinton, Obama, and Biden. The wall and its supporting infrastructure were beheaded in urban centers, causing the “funnel effect,” which pushes migrants into the most remote and deadly parts of the desert to make their crossing. The Pima County morgue in Arizona was filled to overflowing with the unidentifiable remains of those who lost their lives trying to be better off, and when I returned to the United States I stumbled across companies like Elbit Systems, an Israeli company that sells its surveillance technology for use along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Not only was Israel exporting the infrastructure and weapons systems, and even police tactics, that has been used to keep the Palestinians isolated from their own communities. The Palestine Podcast Academy now has a diverse board from all over the world, with decades of collective experience working on human rights in Palestine. Once, as I was walking back towards the U.S. side of the border from Nogales, Mexico, I saw a hastily-painted message plastered across a section of the U.S. border fence: “Las fronteras son cicatrices en la tierra” (“borders are scars on the earth”). Before our borders can scar the earth we must first build a foundation in our minds.

Let us stand up for all those living under the long shadow of oppression and walls of separation. We must balance our struggle to aid ourselves how we might be participating in it. We must balance our struggle to aid ourselves through the struggle to liberate ourselves from our own ignorance and assumptions. In solidarity, from Mexico to Palestine, Sustaining our truly grassroots and liberatory media-training and solidarity campaign requires grassroots support. Learn how you can support us at LatitudeAdjustmentPod.com.

Eric Maddox is the host of the Latitude Adjustment Podcast and the founder/director of the Palestine Podcast Academy.

Berta Cáceres

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meeting up the next day to provide him with money. Prosecution of all the intellectual authors of her assassination is just one way that justice systems around the world are in debt to Berta Cáceres. Any and all factors, from the Honduran Public Prosecutors’ Office may still be unwilling to investigate and prosecute members of Honduras’ economic elite, in the words of Berta Cáceres herself, “they have believed that impunity is eternal but they are wrong. The people know how to do justice.” COPINH has shown time and time again that is true.

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