



Gallery of Remembrance in Tumaco

The Curse of Extractive Economy Illegal Drugs and Plan Colombia

By *CHRISTINE IMHOLZ*, from the Diocese of Tumaco
(Translated by *Anne Schoeneborn*, CSN volunteer translator)

When we talk about the Diocese of Tumaco, we are referring to a territory that includes 9 of the 10 municipalities making up the Pacific Coast of Nariño, located in the extreme southwest of the Republic of Colombia and bordering Ecuador. We are also referring to a territory with some 350,000 inhabitants, most of whom (more than 90%) are Afrocolombian, and the rest of whom are either members of two indigenous groups (the Awá and the Eperara-Siapidara) or mestizo.

We are also referring to a territory of mangroves and vast rainforests—incredibly rich in biodiversity, water and raw materials (like gold). We are referring

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to a territory that, in past centuries, took in and gave refuge to black slaves who had managed to pay for their freedom or who had fled their owner's mines and who, little by little, began to construct a society of their own. Their customs, traditional organizations, and rules of coexistence allowed them to live off the fruits of their own labor—although without great riches or opportunities, and, of course, in a state of complete abandonment by the central government. Nevertheless, the elders speak of this time not so long ago as a time when life was tranquil and no one went hungry.

It has been foreign people and companies, above all, that started, some decades back, to see in this territory an opportunity to further their particular interests: the felling of tropical timber, the extraction of hearts of palm, the mining of gold with heavy machinery, agroindustry with the sowing of oil palm monocultures, etc. All of these “development” projects have had one characteristic in common: extract, extract, extract—almost always without reinvesting or protecting the land's resources. To cite one example related to the mining bonanza of the '70s and '80s: during that time, tons of gold were transported out of the municipality of Barbacoas via helicopter, filling the coffers of the American Choco-Pacific Mining Company. And yet, in order to traverse the 56 kilometers of “highway” to Barbacoas today, it takes at least five hours, and none of the rural schools located there even have functional bathrooms. The only legacy that remains from the mining bonanza is the quantity of deserted, dug up lands that can be found in the middle of the rainforest.

Some of the black families put their faith in this type of development, with the hope of escaping abandonment, of gaining access to modernity (above all, gaining access to education for their children) and of having a better life in the city. Other communities, however, worried a great deal about the increased external pressure over their lands, which had suddenly become attractive to foreign interests. And so, the big question

emerged that continues to plague us today: what type of development do we want to occur here on the Pacific coast of Nariño?

The 1991 political constitution of Colombia opened a big door for the afro and indigenous communities—for the first time, there existed the possibility of being recognized as ethnic groups and as owners of territory. On the Pacific coast of Nariño, the black communities organized themselves and, with significant effort, succeeded in securing the collective ownership of more than a million hectares of land (about 75% of the region). It was declared that this land could not be seized by bank or government; in other words, the land would be considered outside the supply and demand of the free market. In addition, any government or private company with plans to implement a project or program that would affect the afro or indigenous communities would have to carry out a previous consultation with the communities in question.

Such was the hopeful backdrop when, in the same decade of the 90s, the seduction of the fast cash suddenly available through coca farming burst onto the scene—along with all of the associated illegal activity. The coca boom largely caused the other development projects that had been underway to grind to a halt. Furthermore, this new, illegal economy increased the presence of rightwing and leftwing armed actors seeking their share of the new wealth. The Pacific coast of Nariño went from being a forgotten region to being one of the most violent regions in Colombia. For several years, the municipality of Tumaco, which is the largest on the coast, has had a homicide rate four times higher than the national average. There is essentially not a single river, path or neighborhood over which some illegal armed group does not exert territorial and bloody social control. These groups fight for power using infamous force, including via anti-personnel mines, military battles, targeted killings, extortion, and forced recruitment. Of the 15 massive displacements that have taken place in the Department of Nariño in 2010, 14 took place

in the Pacific littoral. With a total 58,000 people displaced, Tumaco is the municipality that has expelled the most people (through December 2011). The main reaction of the national government—through Plan Colombia—has been to exponentially increase the military presence in the region, to conduct aerial fumigation indiscriminately and continuously for several years and, to a lesser extent, to manually eradicate illicit crops.

The corruptive force of the illegal economy is so great that it has permeated the majority of institutions. The population in general does not trust the police or military forces and experience shows that military “solutions” have not brought us tranquility, peace, or the constitutional order expected of a functional democracy.

The call for a different type of solution continues to gain strength. In July 2012, even the Governor of the Department of Nariño called the policy of fumigating and eradicating coca a failure, suggesting that the funds destined to target illicit crops should instead be invested in social programs benefiting campesinos. In a municipality like Tumaco, which in 2011 had an unemployment rate of 72.1%, the most effective and sustainable means of counteracting the effects of the social and armed conflict—with the goal of achieving peace—is to create employment opportunities for the large number of youth and adults who, currently, do not see any other alternatives.

“In front of my house, I have seen several 18-year old “children” killed—children who had been good. I say, ‘had been,’ because later, due to a lack of work, they went down the wrong path.” (Resident of a neighborhood in Tumaco)

“I got my five kids out of here, but I am staying right here on my land.” (Leader of a neighborhood in Tumaco)

During the Minister of Defense's visit to Tumaco on July 27, 2012, the Governor of the Department of Nariño called the policy of fumigating and eradicating coca a failure,

continued on the following page

Action On Colombia is the official newsletter of the Colombia Support Network, a national peace and justice network of groups and individuals working to promote respect for human rights in Colombia and a just relationship between the United States and Colombia through grass-roots activism.

CSN supports a nonviolent, negotiated resolution to the conflict in Colombia.

CSN is the only current project of Wisconsin Interfaith Committee on Latin America

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suggesting that the funds destined to target illicit crops should instead be invested in social programs benefiting campesinos. “I am the Governor of the department that accounts for 27% of the coca crops grown nationally. Four of our municipalities are among the 10 growing the most coca crops, and yet, this is the department that has been sprayed and fumigated the most. In the last 10 years, more than 390,000 hectares of this department have been fumigated ... Spraying one hectare requires six gallons of glyphosate (Round Up Ultra), which means that more than two million gallons of glifosato have been sprayed on this land. You can't really refuse to admit that this must have caused harm.”

Semana por la Paz and the Diocese organized this march : <http://www.pacificocolombia.org/videos/marcha-tumaco-2012/67>



Children playing with home made toys in Barrio Victoria, Tumaco

On the Situation in Cauca

By Marylen Serna, a leader of the Minga and Co-founder of the Movimiento Campesino Cajibío, Sister Community of CSN's Central New York State chapter

The Department of Cauca lies in southwestern Colombia. Historically, it has seen a profound conflict regarding economic, political, cultural and military power, as this region was inhabited by Indigenous groups 520 years ago. At a time of the Spanish conquest and the colonial period, Spanish families and religious communities arrived with the clear intent to conquer the minds, the work force, and the land in the framework of a domination and expropriation model. The Cauca region has a history of slavery, plunder of the land, expulsion of large groups of the native population, and the economy was based on enslaving the Indigenous and African population.

Today the region is inhabited by Afro-Colombian, Indigenous, peasant and popular urban communities, as well as a small regional bourgeoisie of Spanish descent that has strong

economic and political power. In spite of the fact that part of the land held by large landowners has been recovered by peasants, Indigenous, and Afro-Colombian groups, the confrontation persists between economic, political, and military interests and the traditional resistance and popular struggle. As the Indigenous peoples turn into decisive actors, a complex political scenario is taking shape in that region of the country.

Economic interests, and the policies that derive from such interests, make up the fundamental force behind a structural conflict regarding land and territory in which prevail big landholdings, sugarcane monoculture in the flatlands, extensive livestock farming in the south, displacement, and reduced options for decent living of the population groups subjected to this economic logic. Northern Cauca is the “development” area, where in the past few years the State’s policy of competitiveness has concentrated, favoring tax exemptions

for big industries and for foreign direct investment exploiting the advantages of proximity to Valle del Cauca Department, especially to Buenaventura (outlet to the Pacific Ocean), and of the cheap labor of Afro-descendants, Indigenous and other population groups lacking work opportunities.

Those responsible for this structural conflict are the big land owners, big business, and the traditional political class that has allowed a small wealthy sector of Cauca and Valle del Cauca society to take over more than 35,000 hectares through illegal seizure of the land of many peasants, Afro-Colombians and Indigenous groups that make up the majority of the population, and who have been subjected to poverty, marginality, delinquency, and violence.

On the other hand, northern Cauca, where the armed conflict is becoming fiercer, enjoys a strategic location, as it is the entrance to a corridor that links Cauca Department with the Departments of Valle del Cauca, Tolima, and Huila through the Central

On the Situation in Cauca

Cordillera – conditions favorable to the establishment of corridors toward the Pacific used as routes for illegal supply and trade, controlled by drug trafficking mafias and armed groups of various colors.

In this same way, this region – and Cauca in general – is historically a region of popular resistance, where various emancipatory political projects arose and have thrived at different times. It is a territory characterized by resistance and life alternatives. In this context, the northern Cauca territory is also Indigenous; the Nasa people arise there, a people that historically and traditionally have defended to the death their territory, their land, and their autonomy, since the Spanish conquest and up to today. The struggle of the Nasa people is also the story of the struggle of the Cauca Indigenous peoples to organize, to recognize themselves, and to recover what is theirs as a way to exist and to contribute to Cauca society. This project has entailed a tenacious struggle against big landowners, the political class, the military forces, the FARC insurgency, and the various threats to its existence as a people.

The escalation of the armed conflict, and its profound degradation, lead us to think that the State and all the forces that promote the conflict have as goal to evict and dispossess the Indigenous peoples in order to carry out freely military confrontation, defend their own political and economic interests, take over the territory, and extract existing resources through the presence of multinational companies of the mining and energy sectors. The terrible conditions of the war have led to a generalized political uprising of the Nasa people, who strive to keep all armed actors out of their territory as the only way to achieve peace.

What the Indigenous peoples propose is

1. Recognition of the existence of Indigenous peoples as ancestral owners of the territories.
2. Recognition of traditional authorities in the territories, with jurisdiction and political control over them.
3. Recognition of the Indigenous guards as the expression of traditional authority and territorial control.
4. Constitution of Indigenous territories as peace territories.

In this sense, the CRIC (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca), together with the country-wide Indigenous movement gathered in ONIC, accompanied by the Colombian social movement through the Minga Social y Comunitaria, believes that peace is a right, that this right belongs to all Colombians, and that we must turn this right into a social force that will apply a peace agenda in political, social, and community spaces, in opposition to the State's warmongering policies and agenda.

For the above reasons, the communities reject the aim of the forces of war to dispossess the Indigenous peoples of their territory, certain that the best solidarity and support to the existence of these peoples is a permanent and systematic struggle for the right to live in peace anywhere in the country. We call for unity in building a peace policy and a scenario representing all the peoples that make up the Colombian nation, keeping in mind that peace will be achieved through the social mobilization of all the forces opposed to the war.

The Colombia Support Network

Action on Colombia

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Pictures from the Diocese of Tumaco

During the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, take a minute to remember those less fortunate than ourselves and what we can do to make the world we live in a peaceful world. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Colombia Support Network to support our important work!

<http://colombiasupport.net/donate/>

Wicola/CSN is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization. Your tax-deductible donation helps support our advocacy, education and people-to-people initiatives

CSN receives Awards for Design Excellence

Staff report

The Colombia Support Network is receiving national attention in the poster category of *Graphic Design: USA magazine*. The issue boosting of the best graphic design in the country will feature the poster, *Grow Peace*, in its March 2013 issue.

The history leading up to this award is a story within itself. Randy Clark was studying graphic design in graduate school at Utah State University in 1997. Already a seasoned graphic designer, Mr. Clark had done work with Warner Brothers, the Utah Jazz, WalMart, and others.

As part of his studies, Randy had to complete a thesis project that would span 3 years for an M.F.A. degree. With his graduate committee, a number of proposals were submitted and rejected. Contemplating what would be a ground-breaking project, he reflected on the time he was a missionary as a young man in Colombia, knowing of the challenges of poverty is often indifference of government officials, and the strong and resilient citizens of that country faced. Of course, the tragedy of the civil war did not go unnoticed.

Enthusiastically embracing the new proposal by his committee, Mr. Clark set about creating a series of hand printed silk screen posters to bring awareness to the plight of the Colombian people. In August of 2002, an exhibition of these posters was held at the Tippetts Gallery in the Chase Fine Arts Center at Utah State University. At the conclusion of the exhibition, the graduate committee met with Mr. Clark, awarding him a terminal degree in Art, in the discipline of Graphic Design.

The silk screen series of The Civil War in Colombia since, has seen exhibition in different museums around the country: El Museo de las America in Denver, Arte Americas in Fresno, Memorial Union Gallery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, El Museo Latino in Omaha. Pieces from the series are in the permanent collection of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls.

Having now taught at South Dakota State University for the last 13 years, Associate Professor Clark approached Jack Laun on the feasibility of converting the artwork of the posters into a vector files for offset printing, in part to generate income for the organization, and to further its mission of outreach. CSN graciously accepted the opportunity to print the posters in greater numbers with both parties pooling their monies.

Now in print, Mr. Clark set about sending the posters to differing events and competitions around the country. Often these competitions can be brutal, with several thousand entries, and only a few hundred pieces picked. Nevertheless, the CSN poster series are listed in *Graphis* magazine's website for social and political posters, and **The Award for Design Excellence** from *Graphic Design: USA magazine*

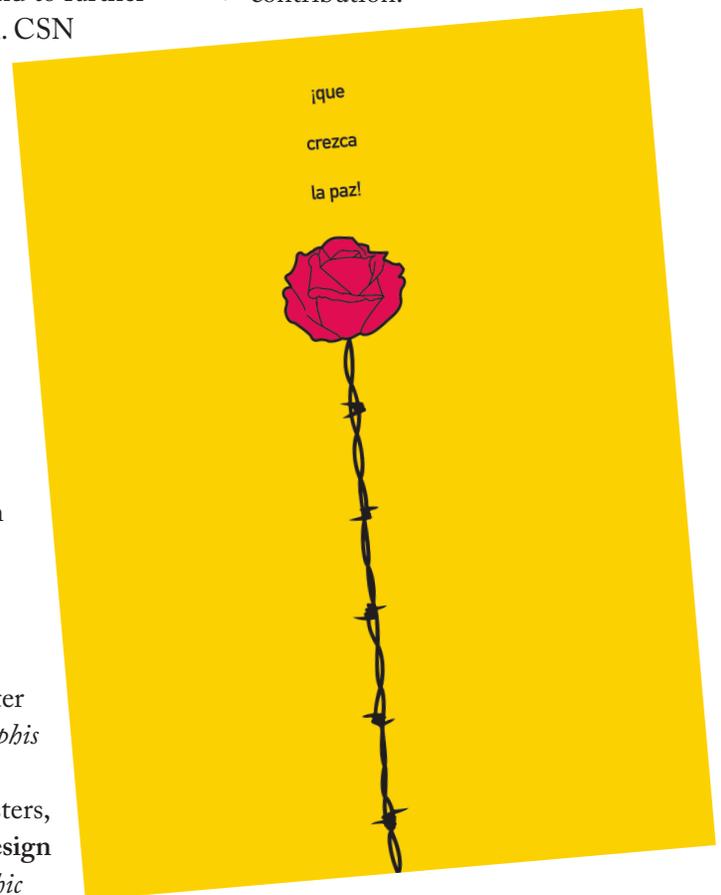
followed a few months later.

"What this all means," states Jack Laun, "is that CSN is getting its message out! ... and in a classy way."

Mr. Clark agrees, "good design is like a cell phone. Before you get one, you just don't see the need for it. Once you have a cell phone, you don't know how you lived without it. The fact is, good design facilitates easier, and more thoughtful communication.

"What I love about the Colombia Support Network is that it takes the side of the Colombian people, instead of an agenda for the government, or paramilitaries, or the guerillas.

"I am not a journalist, nor a researcher, nor a political activist as such ... but I know how to design. That is my contribution."



Will We Ever See Justice

*Attorney Jorge Molano,
Attorney for the Peace Community of San
Jose de Apartado (PCSJA)*

Since its foundation in 1996 the PCSJA has experienced more than 1900 human rights violations. From those, 240 have been extrajudiciary executions which have been carried out so deliberately and regularly that they can be called crimes against humanity.

After the massacre of February 21, 2005, in spite of an order to protect the PCSJA by the Inter- American Court of Human Rights as well as from Colombia's Constitutional Court, it has suffered 14 killings more without protection from any authority.

Since 1997, the PC has denounced the coordinated work between the military and death squads called paramilitaries in Colombia. Such criminal enterprise played an important role in the massacre of February 21, 2005. Testimony coming from members of the Colombian army, taken by the Attorney General's office during its investigation in the case, "shows with absolute certainty, the joint patrolling of army troops and the illegal troops" In this illegal patrolling, the Antioquia Court declared : "What is the role of our national Army? If they, so many armed men, were abnormally afraid, what could be said about peasants in the

region, when they saw them patrolling with such illegal group? Constitutionally, is that the mission of our Army?

In the same case, the Antioquia Tribunal absolved of any responsibility the Commander and his Second from the Velez Battallion, focusing responsibility on Captain Armando Gordillo and some other under his command in spite of the existence of proofs against the first ones : Since the beginning of Operation Fenix – the military name given to the massacre– the Commander of the First Division Mario Montoya ordered the troops to patrol with guides, some of them like "Rat" and "Jonas", who were members of paramilitary structures.

The Commander of the XVII Brigade assumed the responsibility to send as guides for the troops the paramilitaries mentioned above. High officers of the XVII Brigade received money from leaders of the paramilitary groups in order to pay false witnesses who would divert the investigation and the responsibilities for the crime.

Since the beginning the coordinates where the troops were located were altered but the troops were provided with supplies with no difficulty on the terrain, which indicates that the commanders knew without doubt

where the troops were located.

There are radio communication between military and paramilitary. For this to happen the passwords of radios had to be modified in the site of the Brigade or at some position of control, which means that high commanders participated on the criminal deed.

Colombian justice gave credibility to the testimony of Captain Gordillo in order to impose a 20-year prison sentence against him, but at the same time questions his testimony when the line of command's behavior is analyzed. Such is the case of Generals Mario Montoya, Hector Fandiño, Luis Alfonso Zapata, as well as that of Colonel Nestor Duque and Orlando Espinosa, all of them responsible for the planning and execution of "Operation Fenix."

Justice in Colombia has shown that is not willing to do a profound investigation of the crimes committed against the Community, especially the massacre of February 21 of 2005, most of them accepted by the Statute of Rome, which established the International Criminal Court.

It is a notorious fact that up to now the cases have been moved forward "with the purpose of removing the person whose responsibility for the



Tumaco airport with glyphosphate for fumigation on coca plants

for San Jose de Apartado?

crimes is at issue from the jurisdiction of the Court”, a Court where, in addition, “the case has not been tried, or is not being tried in an independent or impartial manner and it has been, or is being tried in a way that, under the circumstances, is incompatible with an intention to require the person whose responsibility is at issue to face justice.”¹

Seven years after the massacre of February 21, 2005 the Colombian justice system has refused to link to the investigation the high military commanders from the national Army who directly participated with due authority in planning and carrying out Operation Fenix. Likewise it has not bound the ones who knew the dangers that cast a shadow over the Community in spite of having responsibility to do so. Even less those who tried to divert the investigation and manipulate the justice towards a wrong result.

From all of the above, we can see clearly the lack of impartiality, responsibility, speed and will to prevent that the acts against the PC remain in impunity. The wrong interpretation of the proofs pretending to blame the responsibility in low ranking officers shows an obvious interest to protect the leaders of this powerful organization which in the last 15 years has distanced itself from legality showing a logic of terrorism against the civilian population.

It is clear that in Colombia with each day that passes the possibilities for justice remain remote because its judiciary keeps colluding with those who commit crimes.

¹ Article 17 of the Statute of Rome for the International Criminal Court, approved on July 17, 1998 by the Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotenciaries of the United Nations concerning the establishment of an International Criminal Court.



Youth in Tumaco calling other young people to action



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