

Action on Colombia

PUBLISHED BY THE COLOMBIA SUPPORT NETWORK/DANE COUNTY-APARTADO SISTER-COMMUNITIES PROJECT
Volume 1, No. 1 Spring 1994

Mayor Arrested in Our Sister City

At 5 a.m. Feb 14 more than 100 soldiers arrested Nelson Campo, the elected Mayor of Apartadó, Colombia. Mayor Campo is no stranger to us — he had hosted the Dane County delegation that visited there last July.

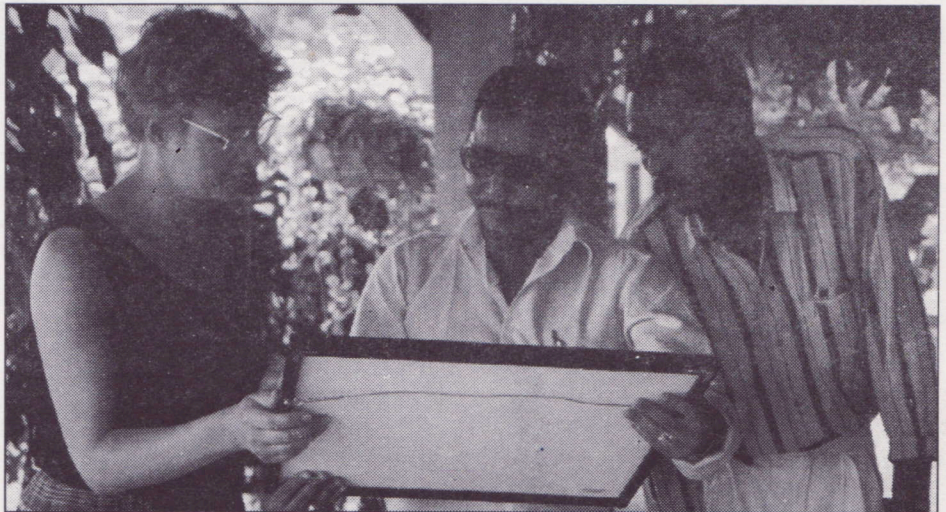
Mayor Campo was charged with complicity in the "La Chinita" massacre, which was carried out on the night of Jan. 23 by hooded individuals who killed 35 persons attending a celebration organized by supporters of the Hope, Peace and Liberty (EPL) Movement.

The Mayor of Apartadó had previously asked judicial authorities to investigate the massacre fully and had promised to lend them his assistance to clarify what happened.

Spokesmen for the Patriotic Union Party said that the detention of the popularly-elected Mayor of Apartadó, who was elected as a their candidate, constitutes an act of governmental retaliation falling within so-called "Operation Return." This Operation aims to eliminate the Patriotic Union's influence in the region by jailing the mayors to remove them from their posts, assassinating municipal council members or forcing them to flee the region, and preventing Patriotic Union leaders from participating in equal conditions during the electoral campaign which is currently underway in Colombia.

Jose Antonio Lopez, a Patriotic Union candidate for the Antioquia Chamber of Deputies, was arrested at the same time as Mayor Campo. Party leader Naun de Urrego was also arrested.

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During a visit to Apartadó in July of last year, Wisconsin State Representative Tammy Baldwin presented Mayor Nelson Campo with a photograph of the Madison city skyline as a memento of friendship between our two communities.

Welcome to Action on Colombia!

Hello! This is the first issue of *Action on Colombia*. We intend to have it come out at least 3 times a year, and keep all our members and supporters informed about what's been happening in Colombia and particularly what we are doing in Wisconsin. It should be a forum for ideas, a sharing of experiences, with the goal of strengthening the efforts for peace and justice in Colombia (and the U.S.A. too!). We'll have calendars of events so folks can plan ahead.

Over the past year or so, we have been increasing our efforts to educate our fellow (North) Americans about the dismal state of human rights in Colombia, to effect some changes in U.S. policy, to "speak truth to power". In July '93, we sent a delegation to Apartadó. In December a group of 8 CSN members met with Senator Russ Feingold to present our case for his involvement in the effort to address the human rights problems in Colombia. He was very supportive and we are keeping in touch with him.

A major effort of ours now is to convince Senator Christopher Dodd, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Sub Committee on InterAmerican Affairs, of the urgent need to hold hearings on human rights abuses in Colombia and the US policies which help perpetuate those abuses.

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Mayor Arrested *from page 1*

The Colombian Nongovernmental Organizations of Human Rights sent a commission to visit Apartadó on January 30–February 1. They talked with inhabitants of the neighborhoods influenced by the EPL and the Patriotic Union, trying to determine who perpetrated the La Chinita massacre.

During their investigation, none of the persons interviewed or any of the parties interested in the case made the slightest reference to any action by Mayor Campo related to the La Chinita Massacre, nor to any demonstration of political partisanship. This all makes the detention of Nelson Campo and the circumstances surrounding it seem very strange, particularly since he has previously

Welcome *continued from page 1*

We want to stop all U.S. military assistance (including School of the Americas training to Colombia) until drastic improvements are made in the terrible human rights situation.

A successful concert of Latin American Music was held in December at Edgewood College, raising money for the "Colombia Update" newsletter put out in Washington. Our Annual Meeting was held February 16. New officers and a board were elected. Tom Boswell gave a report on the Witness for Peace delegation to Colombia that he went on in January.

We have been developing committees to concentrate on different aspects of our work: Outreach/Membership; Finances/Fundraising; Program/ Legislative; and Media. If you'd be interested in helping out in any of these efforts, we'd be happy to see you!

We have monthly meetings, the First Monday of the Month at 7:30 p.m. at Coquitos, 1423 South Park Street. Please join us!

The Colombia Support Network

promoted the idea of establishing an International Oversight Commission

to monitor and prevent human rights violations in Urabá.

A Letter from the "Model Prison" in Bogotá

The following letter was received by the Colombia Support Network on March 9, from Jose Antonio Lopez Bula inside Model Prison in Bogotá, Colombia. Jose Antonio Lopez was arrested in Apartadó on Feb 14, 1994 along with other UIP elected officials, including Mayor Campo and candidates for upcoming elections.

Bogotá, March 8, 1994

Dear Friends:

We have wished to write to inform you that at the present time we find ourselves detained in the National Model Prison in Bogota, the victims of a monstrous fabrication designed by our political enemies of the Esperanza, Paz y Libertad movement, together with military intelligence. They seek to brand the political directorship of the Patriotic Union and the Mayors of our organization as authors or accomplices in the shocking massacre committed against 35 persons in the La Chinita neighborhood of Apartadó, on January 28 of this year.

In order to obtain our detention on the part of the office of the Prosecutor General of the Nation (Fiscalia General de la Nación) they have utilized hidden or secret witnesses whom they have previously

prepared so that they will give testimony in the proceedings against us. They say that we (Nelson Campo, Albeiro Bustamante, Hahum Orrego, Jose Antonio Lopez, and 20 other leaders of the Patriotic Union Party) were those who planned this spontaneous genocide, supposedly for the purpose of provoking a rift among the voters of the Hope, Peace and

Liberty Party. This monstrous fabrication which has been produced seeks fundamentally to close the space in which the Patriotic Union operates in Urabá, to impede us from participating in the elections for Congress and to prevent us from winning again the Mayorship of Apartadó. For this reason the Hope, Peace and Liberty

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Emergency Delegation Planned

In response to the injustices that are occurring to members of our sister-community, the Dane County Colombia Support Network is planning to send a delegation to Apartadó and Bogotá.

The delegation would like to make the federal government accountable for their actions against the political leaders of Apartadó who are currently jailed for crimes they did not commit.

Members of the delegation are likely to include a representative from Amnesty International, a local judge, a journalist, and members of the Madison Colombia Support Network.

Due to the gravity of the situation, the Network believes that it is imperative to send a delegation as soon as possible. The delegation hopes to visit Colombia in early June.

A fundraiser to support the delegation will be held Friday, May 6, from 5–8 p.m. at the Cardinal Bar in Madison. Please attend!

If you are interested in joining this emergency delegation, please contact the Colombia Support Network by phoning (608) 836-5107.

A Letter from Jail

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Party is serving as the instrument of the government and of military intelligence. All are united in order to prevent us from advancing more politically in the region.

At the present time I have been participating in the electoral campaign as a candidate for the Chamber of Representatives as a Patriotic Union candidate, and with my detention, and also with that of Nelson, Albeiro and others, they have succeeded in weakening our work and have sought to soil our image through the means of mass communication. The elections for Congress are set for March 13, 1994 and the election for new mayors is set for October 30, 1994.

We believe that it is necessary to undertake in the United States and in other countries a great international denunciation, which places into evidence the intent to commit fraud which is underway against the UP in Colombia and more concretely in Uraba, and also to bring pressure to bear upon the Government, so that it will cease its complicity and provide full guarantees to the democratic left.

It appears that their purpose is to do away with us politically, and for that reason they have to leave us in prison all the time that they need to take, since from some time ago the army has been preparing this fabricated action against us, trying to link us sometimes as helpers of the guerrillas and other times charging us as arms traffickers, and also as the intellectual or material authors of violent deeds in the region.

We believe that you can intervene, succeeding in having democratic organizations and human rights organizations pressure the Government so that its deeds will become clear and so that it will give us political guarantees. This work could be done in the U.S.A. and in other countries. We thank you very much for the help and solidarity which you can give us in these so difficult moments.

A cordial embrace,
(signed) Jose Antonio Lopez Bula



These people live on an area in Apartado where a massive "land invasion" took place in 1993, with 20,000 refugees moving in to occupy land owned by one of the city's wealthiest property-owners. The land invasion is one of the issues underlying conflict in Apartadó. The La Chinita massacre took place at a festival organized by some of the squatters who belong to the EPL, one of the political parties competing for power in the city. (photo by Sheldon Rampton)

Note: This letter by Jose Antonio refers to the strong antagonism between two popular organizations (UP, EPL) vying for electoral offices in Apartadó. We know of no conclusive evidence to back up his charge that the EPL is working with the Colombian security apparatus. However, we take seriously the charges, as they fit the pattern which the government has

used on other occasions to covertly disrupt popular organizations that challenge the traditional order. And for us in the U.S., we know only too well the disruptions fostered by the FBI (Cointelpro), CIA, military intelligence, etc. upon student, peace, civil rights, Afro-American and Central American solidarity movements.

Help Reach Out for Human Rights!

The Colombia Support Network needs your help to change the human rights situation in Colombia. Here are some ways you can help:

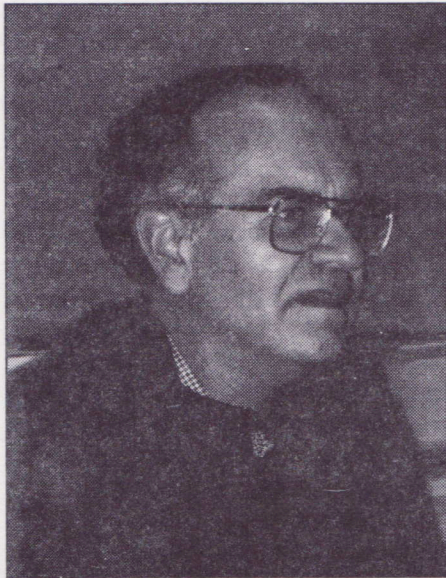
- **Farmers' Market.** Starting April 30, we will have a table at the South Hamilton area. We would like to be there most Saturdays, 9-11 AM. *How about helping sit at the table for an hour?* It's a nice way to spend Saturday morning!
- The CSN Outreach Committee would like to set up *talks, slide shows and video presentations* throughout Wisconsin and nearby Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota. Send us your suggestions! Possibilities include: secondary schools, colleges, Amnesty International chapters, Central American solidarity groups, peace fellowships, labor and occupational health groups, rainforest and animal rights groups, etc.
- Do you belong to an *organization with a newsletter*? Could we occasionally publicize a CSN talk or urgent action notice in it? Please contact us with your suggestions.

Please call John at (608) 274-2245 if you would like to help out or have any suggestions. Thanks.

Father Giraldo Speaks Out Against Repression

Father Javier Giraldo of the Colombian human rights organization *Justicia y Paz*, visited Madison and Milwaukee on March 12–14 to inform concerned citizens about the human rights abuses and political violence occurring in Colombia.

Father Giraldo is a Jesuit priest and executive secretary of the Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace (popularly known as *Justicia y Paz*). He shared many examples of political violence that his organization has documented, and



Father Javier Giraldo

issued an appeal for action from human rights supporters in the United States (see letter on page 5).

On Saturday, March 12, Father Giraldo spoke to about a dozen people at a house meeting organized by Sally Petit, and then to about 30 people at the Peace Action Center (thanks to Christina Paris of the Mobilization for Survival).

Sunday morning, Fr. Giraldo participated in a dialogue with Rev. Tim Kehl at the Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ, followed by a sermon at a mass at Edgewood College organized by Sister Maureen. That was followed with a presentation to the Latino congregation during the coffee hour after Spanish mass at Holy Redeemer Church. He was then interviewed on the Third World View program on WORT. And one more day was still to go!

Bright and early Monday he was interviewed by WPR's *To the Best of Our Knowledge* (for future broadcast), and by George Vukelich for *Isthmus*. At the UW, he spoke to 30 people at a lunchtime seminar; that afternoon, he attended a reception in his honor at the State Capital, sponsored by State Rep. Tammy Baldwin. Despite a bad case of the flu, Dane County Executive Rick Phelps was

one of the officials who made time to attend.

That evening a nice crowd of 100 turned out to hear him speak in Tripp Commons at Memorial Union.

Thanks go out to everyone who helped, particularly to the Nave Committee of UW Latin American and Iberian Studies Program for funding his visit. And thanks to all the great translators—Cecilia, Diane, Mary, Lamoin, Elena.

CSN Loses a Friend

The Colombia Support Network lost a good friend and supporter when the Rev. John Fischer died on January 20, 1994, as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident (Verona Rd and PD, a dangerous intersection). John was the head of the Wisconsin Conference of Churches. We frequently contacted John concerning human rights initiatives and he was always very supportive. He helped us with visiting delegations and speakers from Colombia and showed an active interest in our plans and projects. We will very much miss his energetic, principled efforts on behalf of human rights.

YES! *I want to help stop the violence in Colombia.*

Here is my contribution to the Colombia Support Network and the Dane County / Apartadó Sister-Communities Project.

\$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Mail to: Colombia Support Network, PO Box 1505, Madison, WI 53701; phone (608) 836-5107.

Checks made out to PC Foundation/Colombia Support Network are tax-deductible.

To: All friends of Latin America
From: Justicia y Paz, Witness for Peace, and the Loretto Community
Date: March 25, 1994

Father Javier Giraldo, National President of Justicia y Paz, the Peace and Justice Network of the Religious Conference of Colombia, requests that we address the Colombian Government to investigate and stop the harassment of peasant families who have been forced to flee the violence in the area of Barrancabermeja, Santander, Colombia.

Due to the danger peasant families encountered when fleeing the violence provoked by the military in the Chucuri area of Colombia, an ecumenically supported shelter was established in the city of Barrancabermeja.

Last Sunday, March 20, shortly after midnight, the Shelter (Albergue Campesino) was attacked by a military patrol from the "Poza Siete" Base. The soldiers banged on doors and windows demanding immediate entry. The coordinator of the shelter refused to open the door because the military men did not have a judicial order to enter. They insulted and threatened him, telling him that they would shoot the door down. As the coordinator insisted on a judicial order, the army men told him they would bring the order, and then blow the shelter to pieces. After that, one soldier fired into the interior of the shelter through an iron rod gate. Fortunately, they did not hit any of the peasants who had awakened and had come out to the yard; they were able to avoid the bullets.

Please protest the attack on the Peasant's Shelter in Barrancabermeja, ask the Colombian government representatives to investigate and to sanction those who were responsible for the attack, and to take measures so that life be respected and that the refugees be protected from such threats in the future.

Write to:

President Cesar Gaviria
Palacio de Narino
Bogota, Colombia
FAX 011-57-1-222-1874

Mr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta
Procuraduria General de la Nacion
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Cra 5a, No. 15-80
Bogota, Colombia
FAX 011-57-1-284-0472

Please send copies to:
Colombia Support Network
P.O. Box 1505
Madison, WI 53701

Washington Conference Examines Human Rights in Colombia

The Colombia Human Rights Network sponsored a conference on the human rights situation in Colombia in Washington, DC on March 3. It was co-sponsored by the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced Interational Studies, with participants from a variety of groups, including Americas Watch, Washington Office on Latin America, Amnesty International, and Peace Brigades International. A half dozen participants flew up from Colombia to provide current information and perspectives on their struggle for human rights; they were from the labor movement, the Afro-Colombian community, Convivir (youth group from Medellin), the Andean Commission of Jurists, Justicia y Paz, and a homeless group. Wisconsin Senator Feingold had a staff member present. The Colombian Embassy had originally promised to send a representative but unfortunately backed out from participation.

Peace Brigades International announced that they will be starting a project in Colombia later this year, with a team of 8-12 volunteers providing international protective accompaniment to peasants forced to leave their homes by military and paramilitary attacks. (For more information, contact Janey Skinner, 347 Dolores St #228, San Francisco, CA 94110 (415) 864-7242.)

Colombia: The Neoliberal Agenda?

(from the *New York Times*, 2/10/94)

Although Colombia's macroeconomic indicators look good, not all boats are rising. **The number of people living below the poverty line has increased by about one million since 1990, to include about half of Colombia's population of 33 million people.** In 15 years, the gap between average rural and urban incomes

doubled.

"Blind people believe that armed uprisings of the poor don't match the happy times in which we live: times of cellular telephones, of newspapers with pink pages just like *The Financial Times*, of privatizations and of free-trade treaties," Antonio Cabellero, one of Colombia's most acerbic left-wing columnists, wrote in a news

weekly, *Cambio 16 Colombia*.

"Our countries are countries of two floors: a penthouse built on a slum," he continued. "Neoliberalism has a simultaneous double effect: filling the penthouse with electronic goodies, including burglar alarms, while making the slum below ever more uninhabitable for the great majorities that live there."

Witness for Peace Delegation Visits Colombia

Two members of the Colombia Support Network were part of a four-person Witness for Peace delegation to Colombia in late January and early February. Cecilia Zarate-Laun and Tom Boswell, both of Madison, were accompanied by Ed Griffin-Nolan of Syracuse and Sr. Mary Peter Bruce of Denver on the two-week mission.

The group visited Medellín, Bogotá and several smaller cities in central Colombia. The primary purpose of the trip was for Witness for Peace to explore the possibility of establishing a long-term presence in Colombia. The national ecumenical organization has been providing solidarity with the people of Nicaragua for 10 years and recently began sending volunteers to Guatemala and Haiti.

At our first meeting our first day in Medellín, we met with Monsignor Fabio Henao, who had been leading a new peace initiative in Medellín called *the Working Table for Life*. About 80 church and community groups have been involved in this new grassroots campaign to rid the city of violence and human rights abuses.

Monsignor Henao reported that about 45,000 people have been murdered in Medellín in the last decade and 36,000 of them have been youth. It was the massacre of nine young people in the neighborhood of Villatina in November, 1992 which spurred the city to begin the Working Table for Life. The youth were active in parish groups, and were returning



The boy in this picture is the brother of one of the boys assassinated, reportedly by police, in Medellín's Villatina neighborhood. (photo by Tom Boswell)

from church when they were assassinated, reportedly by members of the national police.

"There are two different societies here," Monsignor Henao told us. "One doesn't sleep because they are hungry. The other doesn't sleep because they are afraid of those that are hungry."

Patricia Fuenmayor, a human rights worker who accompanied us to Villatina to meet with the parish priest, commented: "Here, to be young is to be an enemy of the state." Hundreds of police officers in

Medellín have been killed by the drug traffickers. Each time an officer is killed, the police retaliate by killing a young person, human rights workers told us.

The Witness for Peace is considering forming delegations to link youth and community activists from the US concerned about youth, poverty and drug issues with their counterparts in Colombia. It is hoped that these delegations could begin a dialogue that starts to examine the real issues and real victims behind the "war on drugs."

Literature available from the Colombia Support Network

Political Violence in Colombia: Myth and Reality by Amnesty International. 109 pp. (March 1994) — \$8.

Feeding the Tiger: Colombia's Internally Displaced People, by the US Committee for Refugees. 28 pp. (July 1993) — \$3

Colombia Update (published quarterly by the Washington Colombia Human Rights Committee): Latest Issue (Vol 5, No 3), includes Reflections of a Colombian in Exile; The Challenge

of Environmental Justice; U.S. Radar Base Violates Indigenous Sovereignty — Single copy free. Year subscription comes with \$25 donation to CSN.

Colombia: Inside the Labyrinth by Jenny Pearce (1990) Latin America Bureau/Monthly Review. 311 pp. \$18.

Born to Die in Medellin by Alonso Salazar (1990) LAB/MR book. 128 pp. \$10.

State of War: Political Violence and Counterinsurgency in Colombia (Dec 1993) by Human Rights Watch/Americas. 149 pp. \$15.

The Colombian National Police, Human Rights and US Drug Policy (1993) by WOLA. 58 pp. \$5.

Clear and Present Dangers: US Military and the War on Drugs in the Andes (1991) by WOLA. 154 pp. \$12.

Human Rights Groups Oppose Gaviria as OAS Head

The Colombia Support Network spearheaded a brief effort to oppose the last-minute campaign of outgoing Colombian President Cesar Gaviria to be the next secretary general of the Organization of American States. Bernard Niehaus, the Foreign Minister of Costa Rica, had been the leading candidate until Gaviria announced his candidacy on February 16 with the strong backing of the United States government.

In the call to oppose Gaviria's selection, CSN noted:

- The Gaviria Administration has refused to abide by the decisions of the InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), including one critical of his government's failure to bring to justice military

officers identified by witnesses in a 1989 killing of a labor leader and his associate. On Oct 5, 1993, the IACHR approved 3 reports making charges against the Gaviria government.

- The IACHR has determined that the so-called "public order" jurisdiction of some courts in Colombia, with the existence of "faceless judges" (whose identity is not revealed to the accused) and secret evidence (considered by the judges, but not made known to the accused) contravene the Convention on Human Rights which Colombia signed in 1973.
- In summary, the disregard for human rights in his own country, and his subservance to military

power, make Cesar Gaviria a very poor choice to lead the OAS.

While Gaviria did win the vote on March 27 (thanks to apparent last minute quid-pro-quo from the US), our campaign generated numerous letters, faxes, and e-mail messages to the Clinton Administration.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the campaign against Gaviria's nomination. One outcome of the campaign was that the D.C. Colombia Human Rights Committee received an invitation from the State Department to "meet to talk about it." Pentagon PR flacks were also present at the meeting, an apparent indication that our efforts to put Colombia on the U.S. political agenda are attracting attention.

May Day Celebration in Madison

Madison unionists are joining together with others from the community to celebrate May Day, International Workers Day, with a series of events April 29-May 1. This holiday was originally founded in the U.S. in 1886, in the struggle for the 8 hour day, and spread throughout the world. In the 1930's hundreds of thousands of Americans would rally and march for peace - against fascism, for justice - against racism, for child labor and minimum wage laws. The history of May Day, however, has been virtually erased from our consciousness. Over the past couple of decades, May Day has been observed in a number of U.S. cities, including Madison. This year, plans are for a Working Peoples' Sing Along in the Labor Temple Lounge Friday April 29, a Sunday Picnic in Tenney Park 1-6 PM with live music, talks, dancing, singing, and other entertainment. The Colombia Support Network is an endorser of the May Day Celebration. For more information, contact Norm at 255-1800 or Ron at 249-9066.

Foundation Grant Supports CSN's Work

CSN recently received a grant of \$800 from Resist, to assist us with our outreach activities and to help us become better organized. This first issue of our newsletter is made possible by this grant. Thank you, Resist!

Resist is a progressive funding organization, which raises most of its money thru individual donations. It was formed around 1967, to support resisters the draft and opponents to the Vietnam war — a group rallied around a "Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority." It continues to support a wide range of progressive groups; for more info, contact Resist at One Summer St, Somerville, MA 02143.

Video About Apartadó in Progress

We are currently working on producing a video about our sister community, Apartadó, around our Madison delegation's trip there last summer.

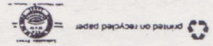
Russ Attoe of the CALA video committee has been video taping many of the talks given by Colombian visitors to Madison, as well as many others. We have recently started a lending library of these video tapes. The list on Colombia includes:

1994—Fr. Javier Giraldo "The Bosnia in Our Backyard-Memorial Union"

1993—Report from July '93 Madison Delegation to Apartadó



1991—Orlando Gaitan and Jahel Quiroga "Voices from Colombia"

1991—Carlos Romero "Commitment to Democracy: Patriotic Union's Role in a New Colombia"



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Emergency Benefit for the Political Prisoners of Our Sister City! Friday, May 6 • 5–8 p.m. Cardinal Bar • Madison

At 5 a.m. February 14, more than 100 soldiers of the Colombian army arrested the mayor of Apartadó, Dane County's sister community.

He and 14 other Apartadó community leaders are now in jail awaiting trial on spurious charges. The Dane County / Apartadó Sister Communities Project is organizing an emergency delegation to visit Colombia and demand justice for the prisoners. Please come to the benefit event and help support human rights in Colombia.

