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who knew that somebody in the world worried and cared about their terrible loss. They had not enough words to express their gratitude. Their feeling of loneliness was greatly reduced by the compassion of a fine human being who could not accept impunity.

My question to all of you is: Why not reproduce this idea in something called CSN's Impunity Project? All it takes is writing letters, which can be sent by mail or by fax. Emails can be erased easily. Letters are more difficult to erase. Copies to the relatives of the victims will enhance the urgency of the case. Copies should also be sent to the authorities, both in the U. S. and in Colombia, and to our office.

Please contact Cecilia Zarate at csn@igc.org or call at (608) 257 8753.

Report on June 5-13, 2004

Sister Community Delegation to Colombia

By Judith Strasser

In early June, seven Wisconsin residents (Nan Cheney, Eunice and John Gibson, and Judith Strasser, Madison; Diane Steigerwald and David Thomas, Milwaukee; and Cecilia Zarate-Laun, CSN's Program Director, visited Colombia under the auspices of the Colombia Support Network, a U.S. non-profit organization. We spent three days in the Peace Community of San José de Apartado, and three days in Bogotá, where we met with Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos; Milton Drucker, Deputy Chief of Mission at the

U.S. Embassy; Juan Carlos Monge of the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights; and leaders of Colombian NGOs concerned with labor, indigenous, and human rights issues. In the city of Apartado, we were received by Bishop Germán García.

We all had qualms about our trip; news reports and State Department bulletins emphasize the dangers of travel in Colombia. We each carried personalized letters from Senators Feingold and Kohl asking that our safety be guaranteed; fortunately, we never needed to show these letters. But the assistance that the



A Peace Community meeting

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 grassroots 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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A call to Latin American brothers

by the Network of Communities doing Non-violent Resistance in Colombia

Testimony from a member of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community during the Social Forum of the Americas (FSA) in Quito last August.

Brothers and sisters of Latin America participating in the FSA: a brotherly greeting from the communities in Non-violent Resistance and Rupture, coming from Colombia, in particular, from the San José de Apartadó Peace Community, located in Antioquia department in the Úraba region.

The community has spent seven years in civil resistance. In opposing the paramilitary project and in resisting the abandonment of our territories, we have had to confront a total paramilitary state in this region since March 23, 1997 because the paramilitaries have not respected our decision as an organization of peasants to declare ourselves non-participants in the armed conflict. The Army has bombed our communities, robbed our earnings and animals, burned our houses on various occasions, and has displaced communities. Some members have joined the paramilitary forces, which have committed five massacres, four of them in San José de Apartadó.

In seven years, with more than 120 assassinations, more than 300 human rights and international humanitarian rights violations, deaths, disappearances, raped women, stolen resources and products, continuing blockades and death threats against community members, it is important to keep in mind that the majority of these events have been announced by the same Army and denounced by the community without any effort by the government to prevent them.

The community has since 1997 had provisional measures dictated by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for the future of the community.

In order to coordinate these measures, the

community participates constantly in meetings with the Vice President of the Republic, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defense, the Attorney Generals office, and the Ombudsman; by petition from the community, investigative commissions have been formed where more than 100 testimonies to these crimes and names of those who have participated in the events have been given. The result has been the assassination of witnesses, as well as their being threatened with death if they don't leave the community.

We the leaders are being prosecuted on the basis of testimony bought by the Army, of which many members are hired killers from Brigade 17 wearing paramilitary uniforms. Many of the people who have been arbitrarily detained have been taken to Brigade 17 where they have been tortured by the order of the same Brigade colonel who shamelessly demonstrated to them that he is inclined to put an end to our community.

President Álvaro Uribe, last May 27, in front of the media, ordered the Prosecutor's Office and the DAS to enter San José de Apartadó and to detain the leaders, placing them in prison, and to detain and deport international persons who visit our community.

This demonstrates the magnitude of the attack against our community. While it is officially a territory devoted to the narco-paramilitaries, Brigades 17 and 11 are also occupying our territories, stealing our resources such as wood, and using our lands for the spread of coca crops.

What they couldn't obtain in seven years of war with us, they are achieving through this farce of these so-called dialogues and with the complicity of the government, the Church, and even the Organization of American States. This is just a small example of what communities

resisting the paramilitary project in certain regions of our country experience, but still we remain standing without submitting to these criminals.

Thus, on behalf of these communities of resistance (which we live daily) we are calling for the solidarity of our Latin American brothers and sisters who say and believe that a different America* is possible through the resistance of the people, so that they make their ideas a reality and come together with concrete facts with these experiences of resistance in our regions of Colombia.

All of the power-holders of the State are in the service of the government and its paramilitaries to attack us. And what is the solidarity of our brothers and sisters of Latin America? It is disheartening for me to participate in this Social Forum of the Americas and not have an opportunity that some intellectuals have to be heard, for example, regarding the situation that we have to live daily. When one is invited to these events one arrives with illusions because this would be an opportunity to gain concrete actions of support for the resistance. Unfortunately we are one more of the guests who come to enjoy the grand comforts and to hear magnificent discussions, but in the end we return with nothing concrete and we continue alone in our resistance.

For all of this I call on the international community to declare itself opposed to our criminal government, and to demand respect for our community and justice for the crimes committed against the Peace Community. To demand that the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights force the government to complete its recommendations with our process.

*America in this context means the whole hemisphere

*Translated by Carly Anne Norgord,
a CSN translator*

WHAT MOST IMPRESSED ME FROM OUR DELEGATION TO SAN JOSE DE APARTADO AND BOGOTA

I believe Father Javier Giraldo is my highlight. His voice is so soft that I am always straining my ears to hear what he has to say. His life is in danger, and probably has been for years, but he says he will never again leave Colombia. Look what he has accomplished with his contribution to starting the peace community, his support of CINEP and his continual letters to the President. He drafts them carefully like a legal document, which they are, not just whining constituent mail that elected officials can shrug off. Some day some truth commission will gather all his constancias and letters and piece together the full record of what has gone on. Without his work, that might never take place.

Eunice Gibson

Of a gathering of about forty courageous, determined, well-organized, and well-trained leaders of the Peace Community. Many of these men and women walked miles to San Jose to meet with us near near the memoria—constructed of painted rocks—that honors community members who have been killed over the past seven years. In turn, each explained why, in the face of extreme danger, they continue to resist the armed actors, efforts to destroy them, their families, and their community. They emphasized the importance of international support for San Jose's continued existence, and thanked us for joining them in solidarity. Their bearing, demeanor, and simple but upsetting words about the conditions of their daily struggle to survive gave meaning to the expression speak truth to power.

Judith Strasser

I was impressed by the wealth of the land, the production of bananas(primitivas) and cacao that supports their lives. But, much more impressive was their determination to remain on their land. A vital ingredient of thisdetermination is great courage and vision of the future. This courage in the face of certain death (for many) and terror (for all) is supported by their strong organization that they are committed to. They are all active members of work groups and participants in grass roots, supportive and visionary workshops. You can see it in their eyes, their body, that fear is an everyday reality and so is their dedication. They are dedicated to surviving, overcoming and spreading the peace communities under the fire of the violence of the armed actors and preventing displacement from their home.

Diane Steigerwald:

The highlight of the trip for me was undoubtedly the "Semillas de Paz" or "Seeds of Peace" daycare center. The kids gave us such a warm greeting and all wanted to be lifted or touched. The kids seemed so happy and healthy in spite of the violence that has touched all their lives. And the staff at the center seemed dedicated to providing them with all the love and support they needed to face the realities of present-day Colombia with the courage shown by their elders. I have no doubt about the future of Colombia. I can look in the eyes of these children and see the courage of children everywhere. I know that fascism cannot survive once the seeds of peace are firmly established.

David Thomas

Needless to say what impressed me the most was the beautiful gathering where the Peace Community gave me a medal of recognition for supporting the Peace Community from its inception. I was moved to tears. As we went to many meetings with them I was very proud on seeing how much they have grown since I first met them when they were all frightened and desperate. They have come a long way and now they handle the meetings and the community's issues like pros!

Cecilia Zarate-Laun

The delegation highlight for me was the visit to the school, especially because I was asked to write a poem on the blackboard. After the poem was translated into Spanish, the teacher assigned the children to copy the poem in their notebooks. The children were so positive, so enthusiastic, and so energetic, in spite of the oppression they have experienced. These children are the hope of the world.

John W.Gibson

AND WHAT LESS IMPRESSED ME!!!!

I'm a former activist within the Democratic Party of Wisconsin who, in my despair over Democrats' move to the middle of the road, can be found on the membership rolls of both Progressive Dane and the Wisconsin Green Party. I was confounded to learn about a third party attempt in Colombia. When the party achieved some success in elections throughout the country, the members were killed. One by one. Hundreds of them. Dead. Yet in the name of stopping drug traffic, Colombia has become the third largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid. The program has been singularly unsuccessful, but the largely military aid continues. Why?

Nan Cheney

President's footnote

By John I. Laun

A disturbing trend has emerged recently in Colombia. When Colombia Support Network began its activities some 16 years ago abusive conduct by the Colombian Armed Forces directed at civilian non-combatants was common. Then for a period of years extending up to the last few months, numbers of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture and rape by Colombian soldiers fell as the "dirty work" of the "dirty war" was carried out by illegal paramilitaries. These paramilitaries often were linked to Colombian army officers and, as in the case of the massacre of Mapiripan, logistics for the movement of paramilitary forces were provided by army officers.

Now, as the paramilitaries are engaged in government-sponsored "peace negotiations," including the absurdity of a formal presentation by Salvatore Mancuso and other cutthroat paramilitary leaders in the Colombian Congress, it seems to have fallen again to the Armed Forces themselves to conduct killings and kidnappings of innocent civilians. As in Tiquisio (sister community of our Methow Valley, Washington chapter), San Jose de Miranda in Santander and Arauca, Colombian army units have directly carried out attacks against innocent civilians. This is a disturbing trend which we need to communicate to our representatives in the Senate and House of Representatives, to see that pressure is placed upon President Uribe and his government to stop these state sponsored criminal acts.

A second development that is very promising is the establishment of bonds of fellowship between CSN chapters and communities in Colombia. In the past year delegations from Minnesota to Mogotes, from Wisconsin to San Jose de Apartado, from Central New York State to Cajibío and from New York City to the Alto Naya have set in place a framework for meaningful contributions between each U.S. community and its Colombian sister. We were privileged to have to extraordinary local leaders working in those communities, Father Joakin Mayorga (Mogotes) and Marylen Serna (Cajibío), with us at our national meeting in April. Our goal is to deepen and strengthen these contacts and form new sister community relationships to make it possible for our voices to be heard seriously in the counsels both of our government and of the Colombian government.

Interested in becoming an active CSN Member? Contact a CSN Representative in your area!

Chapters in formation not listed here. Please contact the CSN office to learn of Chapters in progress near you!

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Items for Sale

All items with the CSN logo as pictured left, in color (vibrant red and blue).

T-Shirts—S, M, L, XL	\$16.00
Bandanas—	\$6.00
Buttons—	\$1.75

Bumper Sticker

If you like Vietnam,
You will love Plan Colombia \$3.00

Video

Plan Colombia Cashing in on the Drug War Failure Ungermann/Audrey Brohy	\$22.00
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Excellent film showing the reality of
the conflict

The Colombia Support Network
Action on Colombia

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- GOING ON A DELEGATION TO COLOMBIA
- TRANSLATING/INTERPRETING
- SETTING UP A TALK AT MY SCHOOL, GROUP, OR CHURCH
- PARTICIPATING IN CSN WORKING GROUPS

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