

# Peninsula Progressive

the newsletter of Peninsula Peace and Justice

Issue 1 No. 4 July/August 2004

FREE!

## Mothers revolt

by Diane Fitzgerald of Blue Hill

On June 14, Flag Day, I attended the demonstration by Mothers for Peace at the Federal Building in Bangor. It was more than a year ago that members of our affinity group were arrested there—at the start of the invasion of Iraq—for blocking the entrance to the building. We had been denied access as a group to deliver a statement to our Senators Collins and Snowe, so we sat on the floor, waiting to be heard by our Senators.

One year later, the lies that we were calling to the Senators' attention—no weapons of mass destruction, no imminent threat to U.S. security—have been proven as fact. So on June 14, we returned to the Senators' offices, marching slowly, a drum beat in punctuation. We delivered letters demanding the end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. (*con't p. 2*)



(top) Judy Robbins, of Sedgwick, reads the names of 834 dead American servicemen and women. (bottom) Pat Wheeler, of Deer Isle, mourns at a mock funeral in front of the Federal Building.



Photos by  
Kelly  
Bellis  
June 14,  
2004,  
Bangor

## The human cost of globalization: Zapatistas struggle for autonomy

by Nancy Hill of Stonington

[Nancy Hill writes about her assignment as a human rights observer in Chiapas, Mexico.]

I arrived in the town of Emiliano Zapata after spending seven hours wedged in the back of a cattle truck with 40 indigenous people. The machete-severed toes of the lady next to me were a reminder of the brutal reality of Chiapas.

The town is one of many named after the hero of the Mexican land reform revolution of 1910. It rests on the edge of the beautiful Rio Jatate, near the Lacandon Jungle. With banana and papaya trees, coffee and bromeliads, it is lush and clean and glitters at night with fireflies. This town of about 180 people came into existence seven years ago, inventing itself with high ideals and hard labor. It is "reclaimed land," redistributed from a hacienda that had dominated the entire valley and where peasant farmers were near slaves.

On January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA was signed into law, thousands of indigenous people of Chiapas rose in revolt. Calling themselves EZLN, or Zapatistas, they demanded autonomy from a government which had ignored their plight and was eager to exploit their land. Chiapas is resource rich, with multinational corporations jostling for its petroleum, water, uranium, pulpwood, exotic woods, and plant DNA.

The Zapatistas anticipated the cost of "free trade" to them: loss and degradation of their land, their lifestyle, culture and language. Past struggles had earned them agrarian reform, constitutionally granting them their ancestral land for communal use. Now the U.S. dumps corn on the Mexican market at far below the price of production, economic warfare to these subsistence farmers. (*con't, p. 4*)

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**(Mothers revolt con't)**

In front of the Federal Building, slowly and clearly the names of over 800 Americans killed in Iraq were read. During the reading of the names, we had a mock funeral. I joined three other women to act as a mourner, wrapping the six people laying on the ground in white sheet shrouds and then placing flowers and an upside down flag on each. The tears came of themselves as I mourned.

The names continued to be read. I thought how each of these names had been carefully chosen by loving parents after the birth of their child, a child who had been a unique individual in his or her short life. (Oh, they were so young.) As Mothers for Peace—and fathers, brothers and sisters—it was so easy to mourn these lives cut short by a government and corporations, all self-serving and profit-motivated.

The names went on. I felt like covering my ears and running away. But instead, I continued to mourn, and we comforted one another.

Taps was played and the mock funeral ended. Still solemn, we who had gathered--Mothers for Peace, Veterans for Peace, Pups for Peace (two peace dogs—made our way up the hill to Olympia Snowe's office. Had anyone from that office seen the demonstration? I wondered. "Yes," they said.

Will it make a difference? It has to!

If just one person walking past the Federal Building has had their heart or mind moved by our actions, we were successful. And the gathering together of like-minded people, the speaking out together, gives strength to do it again. We must stand and witness. We must speak out against the sad path down which our country is being led.

**Pastors for Peace challenges United States' Cuba policy**

*by Judy Robbins of Sedgwick*

On June 19, a delegation led by the Let Cuba Live Committee of Maine traveled to the U.S. Customs checkpoint on the Maine/Quebec border at Coburn Gore. There they met members of a Montreal group--Caravane d' Amitie Quebec-Cuba--to receive a shipment of humanitarian aid into the U.S. The shipment consisted of medical and school supplies destined for Cuba. After five hours of negotiations with U.S. Customs, the shipment was allowed to pass, and the 15th Pastors for Peace US-Cuba Friendship Caravan was underway.

"We never know what we will face at U.S. Customs when the word 'Cuba' is mentioned," said Steve Burke of Warren. "If this shipment were destined for any other country, there would be no questions asked. But to send

medical supplies to Cuba? The U.S. government frowns on that, often to the point of seizing the materials. Fortunately, today, reason finally prevailed, and these vital supplies can now be taken on the caravan."

U.S. Customs, after contacting the Boston office for instructions, offered an ultimatum to the Canadians: return to Canada with their shipment or have it seized. But the members of the Caravane d' Amitie were determined and U.S. Customs ultimately relented and released the shipment. The crossing occurred at a time when the Bush Administration is making legal travel between the two countries more and more difficult. Cuban-Americans are now allowed to visit family members in Cuba only once every three years.

The Maine crossing was the first of three to take place along the length of the U.S./Canada border and kicked off the 15th Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba, which involves over 100 people traveling in 25 trucks and buses along 13 North-to-South routes nationwide. The entire Caravan will be carrying nearly 2 million dollars worth of humanitarian aid to be donated to the people of Cuba.

The participants on the Caravan intend to demonstrate "a moral alternative to an immoral foreign policy," according to organizers, by openly traveling to Cuba in violation of the restrictions imposed by the blockade on travel and on donations of humanitarian aid.

The Maine send-off party was on June 20, when the aid from Canada was brought to the Liberty School in Blue Hill. The celebration included drumming, the sharing of Cuban-style sheet cake, and short speeches on U.S.Cuban policy.



*Caravane d' Amitie members donate humanitarian aid to Cuba, Coburn Gore, June 19, 2004. Photo by Steve Burke.*

**Featured website:** [www.runagainstbush.org](http://www.runagainstbush.org)

Participate in road races and informal jogs as part of a national campaign to challenge the Bush administration's policies. Contact Tony Aman at 326-9574 for details.



About 75 people attended the first annual PPJ Blue Hill Independence Day March, July 4, 2004. Photo by Tim Sullivan.

### **What America Needs film showing and interviews**

In 2002, filmmaker Mark Wojahn traveled by Amtrak to interview people in the U.S. He asked people from all walks of life, "What do you think America needs?" He found that "all kinds of Americans instinctively understand many of the same essential truths. . . . In essence, the movie is a declaration for the democratic ideal and the democratic necessity of talking and really listening to what people have to say. It is a State-of-the-Union address by everyday people whose viewpoints are rarely sought or heard in conventional media."

Wojahn's documentary film will be shown at the Blue Hill Library, Thursday, July 22, at 7 p.m. Respond to Wojahn's question during the film discussion or the all-day interviews at the Blue Hill Post Office on July 15.

### **Blue Hill coffeehouse starts up**

Singer-songwriter Sorcha Merrill was the featured artist at the inaugural Blue Hill coffeehouse at the Liberty School on July 2. The coffeehouse will be held on the 1st and 3rd Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. with an open mic for all aspiring musicians, poets, and other spoken word artists. Juliane Gardner, of Castine, will be featured on July 16.

Coffee and baked goods are available. A \$5 donation is suggested, the proceeds benefitting Peninsula Peace and Justice and Art Activism. For more information, contact Carolyn at 326-8830 or info@artactivism.org.

### **Quotable:**

"We are all born ignorant, but one must work hard to remain stupid."—*Benjamin Franklin*

### **Calendar**

**July 14** Peninsula Peace and Justice, Liberty School, Blue Hill, 6:30 p.m. fmi: 326-4405

**July 15** "What do you think America needs?" interviews at Blue Hill post office, all day. To help, call 326-8830

**July 16** Blue Hill coffeehouse, Liberty School, 7:30 p.m. fmi: 326-8830

**July 22** *What America Needs*. Film. Blue Hill Library, 7 p.m. fmi: 326-4405

**July 24-25** WERU Full Circle Summer Fair, Blue Hill Fairgrounds. fmi: www.weru.org or 469-6600

**August 6** Blue Hill coffeehouse, Liberty School, 7:30 p.m. fmi: 326-8830

**August 11** Peninsula Peace and Justice potluck & meeting. Liberty School, Blue Hill, 6:30 p.m. fmi: 326-4405

**August 20** Blue Hill coffeehouse, Liberty School, 7:30 p.m. fmi: 326-8830

### **On-going vigils**

Blue Hill bridge, 12-12:30 p.m., Sundays  
Deer Isle Congregational Church, 4-4:30 p.m., Mondays



Artwork by Gunda Schroeder

**(Zapatistas con't)**

Today 60,000 Mexican soldiers occupy Chiapas, one-third of Mexico's entire military and engage in tense warfare, intended to drive the 1.5 million indigenous people off their land. The military also supports a vast network of paramilitary, whose methods are often more terrorizing and horrific. Supporting protection of investments rather than ecology or indigenous culture, a Chase Manhattan Bank memo of 1994 encouraged the Mexican government to "eliminate the Zapatistas."

Many Chiapas towns request an international presence as protection from military violence. The Fray Bartolome Human Rights Center in San Cristobal, Mexico organizes and trains volunteers, and the towns provide the observers a room with beams strong enough to hang a hammock, firewood, and tortillas twice a day. The tortillas are a generous offering considering the villagers must plant, harvest, grind, pat, and cook the corn. As an observer, I had to speak Spanish fluently and document any human rights violations. My spare time was spent reading to children and working in gardens.

Most of Zapata's residents are Tzeltal speaking, one of more than 31 Mayan languages, and about half have some Spanish fluency as well. Three families are indigenous Tzotziles, refugees from the 1997 massacre in Acteal, where 45 peasants, nearly all women and children, were murdered in church. Several of the Mexican officers involved in the planning were graduates of the School of the Americas, at Fort Benning, Georgia.

A day in Zapata starts at 3 a.m. when a chunk of metal is hammered, signaling that it is time for the women to rise to begin making tortillas. By 6 a.m., the men have left town with a machete and perhaps a horse and hoe to tend their fields. There are no cars or bikes in the valley.

Seventy percent of Chiapas has no electricity in town, even though this southernmost state is the country's leading producer of hydro-electric power. All buildings are dirt floored, with banana leaf or tin roofs. Every family has an outhouse and bathes in the river.

The town is run communally and democratically. Each family has its own parcel of land to work, but all work together on common land to contribute to town projects. One communal purchase was a marimba which is played by kids and adults alike. They have also bought basketballs, and a solar cell and battery in order for the town to have a radio.

With the help of international volunteers, the village has trained its own healthcare and education professionals. The town helps these workers with their fields and firewood-gathering chores. Town rules prohibit alcohol and drugs, genetically modified seed, as well as chemical pesticides and fertilizers, which they feel

desecrate the land. Men take turns, two at all hours, guarding the town. One night I was there, a conch signaled danger when about 200 soldiers were on the outskirts of town. The following day none of the men worked in their fields for fear of leaving their families unprotected.

Each day I was there, military vehicles passed. They were the only vehicles on the road except for three trucks a day that served as public transportation. Soldiers were in full gear, with rifles in their laps. They gave menacing looks and often made obscene gestures.

On their Mother's Day, when each family brought their only piece of furniture, a bench, to the town field to hear the children recite poetry and dance, I saw everyone's unease when six military planes flew over and helicopters buzzed above the town.

On May 3, the indigenous people gave their blessings and thanks to the springs from which flows their drinking water. Colorful banners and a flute and drum led a procession up the mountain. The entire town followed, with copal incense wafting. Large tubs were carried to cook their corn beverage, atole, prepared the previous day. Each family brought a chicken to sacrifice ritually. The respect and reverence given to water was beautiful and poignant. Their government hopes to dam these valleys to produce electricity and water for us "first worlders" who use the water so thoughtlessly.

It is an honor to know these indigenous people who understand the worth of their land and culture, and a revelation to see intimately the human cost of globalization.

fmi: School of the Americas info: [www.soaw.org/new/](http://www.soaw.org/new/)  
 Mexican Solidarity Project: [www.mexicosolidarity.org](http://www.mexicosolidarity.org)  
 Fray Bartolome Human Rights Center:  
[www.laneta.apc.org/cdhbcas/](http://www.laneta.apc.org/cdhbcas/)

**Peninsula Peace and Justice** provides a community forum for local and global issues of social, economic, and environmental justice. The group strives to create a space where growing awareness may be realized as inspired action.

Join the Peninsula Peace and Justice (PPJ) mailing list:

Peninsula Peace and Justice  
 P.O. Box 1515  
 Blue Hill, ME 04614  
 robbins@downeast.net

Receive the PPJ News and Alert  
 e-list: [robbins@downeast.net](mailto:robbins@downeast.net)



Send newsletter suggestions to

Carolyn Coe:  
[coecarolyn@hotmail.com](mailto:coecarolyn@hotmail.com)  
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