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“It is time to stop this shit,” banner in Nicaragua (top left)—Throneberg; Federal riot police in Oaxaca (top Right); A masked youth in Oaxaca (bottom left); Nicaraguan election judges and party observers marking out unused ballots (bottom right)—Throneberg

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While The Dragon Sleeps... Latin America Catches Fire

A fond farewell and best wishes for the future to Darrin Drda who has done layout, cartoons, and articles for this paper for the past five years.
The Oaxacan People’s Insurrection for Dignity

By Korinna Maldonado

On the dawn of Friday, October 27, 2006, news of the assassination of the New York Independent Media reporter Brad Will by paramilitary forces in the southern state of Oaxaca, Mexico reverberated throughout the world. This day marked the beginning of the direct state-sponsored offensive towards the Oaxacan people who had tired of the repression and corruption of the governor Ulises Ruiz. For nearly 8 months they have peacefully organized to remove him from office. Ruiz has been the subject of an escalating conflict. He was elected in August 2004 through fraudulent means and since then has persistently used brute force against social and political organizations.

On that dark Friday, six barricades across the city of Oaxaca were under attack at the same time by paramilitary forces including the barricade where Brad Will lost his life reporting. The results of these premeditated attacks were three dead and 23 members of the popular movement injured. But even worse, the death of Brad Will would serve as the perfect excuse for the federal government to enter Oaxaca with all its repressive might despite almost six months of neglect amidst the plea of civil organizations and the people of Oaxaca for the federal government to intervene.

The brutal sacking of Oaxaca by the federal police forces and their allies has lead to even more violence and a virtual state of martial law. Today the social cost of dissent stands at 23 deaths, more than 250 imprisoned, 100 disappeared, and women and minors raped. President-elect Felipe Calderon has stated his unwillingness to negotiate with the movement. Likewise, his right wing cabinet has declared the regimes intention to squash social movements.

TEACHERS STRUGGLE FOR DIGNIFIED EDUCATION

The conflict between the state and the Oaxacan people began May 22 as 70,000 teachers belonging to section 22 of the teachers union initiated a strike pleading for a raise of their wretched salaries, as well as a monthly bonus for teachers and the right to conscientiously abstain from the distribution of current events related to funding for school materials, children’s uniforms and free school breakfasts.

Every year, the teachers strike for such demands and until 2006 negotiations would occur. This time around, Ulises Ruiz’s government first threatened the teachers and later brutally evicted them from the town plaza where the governor’s headquarters is located. Haunted by the nightmares of recent state violence in Atenco, Mexico, where peasants sympathetic to the Zapatistas stopped the development of an airport, 300,000 outraged inhabitants of Oaxaca poured into the streets. They protested the state violence and marched through Oaxaca demanding the governor’s immediate resignation in what was perhaps one of the biggest civil protests in Oaxacan history. During the march the previously evicted teachers would once again reclaim the central plaza. This event would unite dispersed and divergent organizations and groups into one organization, the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca. Their goal: the immediate resignation of the state governor Ulises Ruiz.

On June 17, the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO by its Spanish acronym) was born. It would challenge the state government through pacifist means, with words, ideas, and most importantly, dignity. Local unions, peasants, students, women and environmental organizations, indigenous communities, teachers and whole families from across the state united to form this radical organization. Their collective process of decision-making and political action has a long tradition among Oaxacan indigenous towns. After the Zapatista armed uprising it has been further revitalized.

On July 5, as the Mexican people contested the election where rightist Felipe Calderon was declared victorious, the APPO occupied the government headquarters situated in the central plaza of the city and declared itself a parallel government of the state of Oaxaca. Oaxacans were infuriated watching the governor cynically respond to the interests of foreign investors and tourists. During July and August, the APPO also reclaimed the Guelaguetza—a yearly celebration where the 7 regions of Oaxaca are represented through performances their culture—that had was one of the main tourist attractions. It had become a corporate enterprise guided by the leading businessmen of Mexico. APPO would also reclaim the local media, 12 radio stations and for small periods of time the local TV station.

The radio stations would become the heartbeat of the APPO, through which they would organize across Oaxaca, calling people to regional and general meetings, and informing the people of local agreements, mobilizations, road blockades, food and first aid needs. In August, that is how they organized the takeover of the city of Oaxaca. The radio would also serve to inform human rights organizations if violations were committed. Many of us following the movement from afar could access the Oaxacan radio broadcast through the web, and international supporters could mobilize almost instantly.

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Although the struggle of the APPO is rooted in the local politics of Oaxaca, they have clearly bridged it with anti-globalization and social justice movements across the nation and the world. The past experience of fraudulent electoral politics in Oaxaca fueled a rather sentiment against the presidential elections. The people would chant vociferously: “He fell, he fell, Ulises fell and if there is no solution so will Calderon”.

The effects of the conflict on the lives of the Oaxacan people are very complex: the salaries of the approximately thirty thousand teachers in the struggle have been cut off, many small businesses in the region have no customers, vendors of local produce have not sold of corn or squash, many members are jobless due to the conflict. Yet, they are able to resist because the people draw upon years of experience of autonomous collective organizing visible in the forms of everyday resistance. The indigenous communities, the peasant communities, the popular neighborhoods and other supporters of the APPO deliver daily to the barricades and encampments tortillas, stews, water, hot coffee and chocolate.

At the same time, representatives of organizations come and go in groups from all over the state of Oaxaca. Some people travel up to 12 or so hours to get to the city. They come with their hand-made banners in support of the struggle and with musical instruments from their towns. They take turns guarding the barricades, the radio stations, the government headquarters, and the main roads to the city.

Members of the APPO speak many different languages, that come from the 16 indigenous groups that make up the state of Oaxaca. They all come from different experiences of struggle, from different social positions and therefore, from different experiences of oppression. As a woman said on people’s assembly Radio Universidad, “we are not teachers, we are the people, look at us, we are the people that are struggling for our rights... until Ulises steps down we are not going to stop.”

OAXACANS CRY FOR A NATIONAL PEACEFUL INSURRECTION

On October 30, the federal government ordered the federal police to enter the city of Oaxaca. With full armor, thousands of federal police forces entered the city accompanied by tanks and bulldozers to crush the barricades. Simultaneously, police
Poems from Prisoners

By Nate Collins

Keep It, It's Yours

Ashley, hey can you hear me?
I am running late, sorry, I am on my way
Got something I need to ask you
Remember the first time we met?
Your eyes pulled my heart from my chest
That day I learned what love really meant
I owe you an apology, for I acted a fool
My intentions were to stay on top of that barstool
Nevertheless you helped me up and
Whispered "Nate, keep your mouth shut!"
Or how the little things made me so pissed
You cured them with an amazing kiss
Sorry it took so long to notice
Thank you for helping me get focused
I owe you a lot no doubt

Cries of Life

By Jason Walker

The Clock

A circle of such signification
Sixty marks of mental anguish
The short arm vaguely stating where the sun sits in the sky
While the long arm moves with unbelievable regularity
Followed by my anxious eyes
The red arm flies over both nostrils
The burning sun of this inside world
Beige, white, black, red, and full of numbers

Remember that thing from my chest you pulled out?
Keep it, it’s yours.
For today and many more
I love you!

Keep It, It's Yours

By Jason Walker

By DeAndre Lewis

It's sad to say and even worse to see
Black on black crimes even within families
We've fallen so far that funerals are the only place
you'll catch us giving hugs coming from real love
Sure, our ambition is to survive
through the good and bad times
But I wonder, when will this pain die?
AN OVERWHELMING WIN
By now you surely know that President Chavez won re-election in Venezuela for another six-year term. What you might not realize is how decisive the victory was. Chavez won 63% of the vote, which was more than he won in previous elections. You might have expected the opposition—that some people would become disillusioned by the slow pace of progress in some areas, like reducing unemployment, reducing crime, reducing corruption. But in fact what has happened is the opposite: the government has broadened its support as the government and the social movements behind it have turned promises into reality, extending education, health care, and job training into parts of the population that had never seen them before. To put it crudely, they delivered the goods.

Chavez carried every state, even including Zulia, the state of which opposition candidate Manuel Rosales is governor. It’s as if Gore carried every U.S. state in 2000, including Texas. Progressives in the U.S. haven’t enjoyed an electoral rout like this since FDR, something that rosases the U.S. might reflect on.

For the first time, the opposition accepted the result. Rosales conceded defeat. The opposition did not, and large, try to manufacture absurd charges of fraud. In 2004, the polling firm Penn, Schoen and Berland had produced a controversial exit poll in the referendum on Chavez that contradicted the official result and more credible polls and was used by the opposition in Venezuela and abroad to try to discredit the official result. This time, after Penn, Schoen had been so discredited that major media in the U.S. stopped reporting their polls, Penn, Schoen managed to produce an exit poll that showed the same results as everyone else, including the official count.

POSSIBLE THREATS
The U.S. government, to its credit, also changed its tune somewhat. Thomas Shannon, US Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, said, “The political battle that is unfolding within Venezuela is now conducted through democratic institutions.” He also said that Washington was looking at Caracas based on “hard facts” of Caracas approaching bilateral ties.

This apparent change in the stance of the U.S. government and the domestic opposition, if it persists, is really important. The Venezuelan government and the social movements supporting it have demonstrated that the process of social reform they have initi- ated can go forward in the face of U.S. government opposition. It can also go forward in the face of the type of opposition that the historically privileged elite in Venezuela has politicized. But maybe they changed their minds between the legislative elections and the Novem-

ber presidential. Did the voters elect Correa because he was to the left of Noboa?

WHAT’S LEFT?
We are back to the question in the title, “What’s Left?” Cor- rea has stated that he wants to strengthen the already national oil company, to gain control over the country’s energy, and to provide the poor with affordable housing and cash subsidies. He also said that he did not want to renew the agreement, which will expire in 2009, that permits the U.S. military to have a Pacific coast surveillance base in the country. Early in the campaign, he had also proposed a “cit- izen’s revolution” to convene a constitutional assembly that would shift some of the power from the very powerful legis- lature, which can force presidents from office almost at will, to the presidency itself. This legislative power has re- resented Bush as “dimwitted.” He did, however, say that he had “nothing personal against Bush.” Whether his com- ment was meant personally or not, perhaps the people of Educar were so proud of Dr. Correa’s precision and courage that they wanted him to say it to Bush face-to- face, one head of state speaking directly to another.

3. The Ecuadorians agree with Correa’s political and eco- nomic positions more than they agree with the conservative Noboa. This is a tough one because they had already elect- ed a legislature in which the majority was more like Noboa. But perhaps the biggest fear of conservatives is that Correa would join with Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, and, if they fear, now Nicaragua (despite Ortega’s protests to the contrary) in being vehemently opposed to the neo-lib- eral vision and practice of free trade and hostile to U.S. policies. The other option, which the conservatives fear less, is that he would be closer to Argentina, Brazil, and perhaps closer to Argentina, Brazil, and perhaps never before the poverty of our language in dealing with contemporary political complexities.

Continued on page 5

“So, where indeed does Correa stand? Is he a Lef-" According to Professor Baer, that’s not Left. Of course, we don’t know that Professor Baer’s characterization of his student is accurate. We will have to watch Correa’s performance over time to know that. But what is obvious is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to give any pre- cision to the word “Left” in the Latin American context. How can we characterize extra-institutional social move- ments in many of the countries, armed revolutionary groups in Colombia and Mexico, the Cuban regime, Venezuela, Nicaragua under the ever-so-Catholic Ortega, Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil if all we have in our political vocabulary is “Left” and its opposite “Not Left.” Either with a laudatory or a condemning insinuation? The political dynamics in Latin America today are demonstrating as much as never before the poverty of our language in dealing with contemporary political complexities.

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela

"Escualidos for Chavez?“ What I Saw at the Venezuelan Election
Robert Naiman, Merida, Venezuela, December 7, 2006

Robert Naiman, Merida, Venezuela, December 7, 2006

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela
BRIEF NICARAGUAN HISTORY AND U.S. INVOLVEMENT

The U.S. has a long history of involvement in Nicaragua. In 1912, the U.S. sent 2,500 Marines into the country to install a friendly government. Resentment to such intervention was always fierce, and it was the possible return of Sandinista power that the U.S. administration feared enough to use undemocratic and manipulative tactics in an attempt to sway the 2006 elections. Meddling started early, in 2004, with U.S. Ambassador Barbara Moore trying to influence political leadership selection through meetings with right-wing forces. Formerly an Eating Frog was the Ambassador to Nicaragua in 2005 and continued the same line of interference. In April of 2006, he offered to finance the more right-wing political parties if they would result in the choosing of only one presidential candidate, therefore increasing chances to defeat Ortega. When the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC), which held power before the current president, refused to back away from its candidate, Trivelli criticized the pact as ‘not in the category of democratic parties." After meeting with Eduardo Montealegre who left the PLC and formed the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN), Trivelli referred to Montealegre as the "democratic choice" for president.

Our delegation had an opportunity to meet with representatives of the four main political parties: the ALN, the PLC, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), and the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS). It was clear why the current U.S. administration was behind Montealegre’s party. Throughout our meeting, the ALN party members said things that were nearly verbatim what U.S. citizens have heard countless times from Bush administration officials regarding terrorism threats and fighting terrorism abroad before we have to fight it at home. They spoke

graciously of Ronald Reagan and his policies in Nicaragua, such as supporting the Contra fighters. They are eager for the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) to move forward and swear that it will help small farms despite all the evidence to the contrary for Mexican farmers after NAFTA took effect.

U.S. Embassy spokesperson Kristin Stewart has publicly connected Daniel Ortega with terrorist groups and stated that “if a foreign government has a relationship with terrorist organizations, like the Sandinistas did in the past, U.S. law permits us to apply sanctions. [...] Again, it will be necessary to revise our policies if Ortega wins." A few from our group were able to ask Ms. Stewart directly about these statements. She verified that the quote was correct, and feared of criticism by saying that she was free to say what she wanted about the issue. She then defended her contention that Ortega was linked to terrorists by stating that in a suspect in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing was carrying 5lake Nicaraguan passports. Further connections were not offered.

Such interventions were openly criticized by at least one U.S. official, Congressman Jose Serrano of New York, who issued a press release criticizing the interference of U.S. representatives in the Nicaraguan elections and urging neutrality. In reference to Embassy spokesperson Stewart’s remarks, Serrano stated, "Electroenering is not the proper role of an Embassy or its spokesperson.”

The U.S. Embassy reports that $12 million came from the U.S. to Nicaragua for "technical support programs for the elections." The money went to many areas including civic education. We met with a group called flowers for Nicaragua that worked with campaigns to get out the vote, register voters, and distribute voting documents. At their offices we were given comic books of Nicaraguan history, and on looking through them we were interested to find a severely skewed depiction of history. By the U.S. On top of the Sandinista government. This was not the only example we heard or saw of USAID money being used to pass out propaganda with such a partisan view of history. Perhaps the most vicious threats were those of two U.S. congressmen, Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) and Dan Burton (R-IN), who suggested that the U.S. look into blocking remittance money being sent to Nicaragua and cutting aid to the country if Ortega were to win. Remittances are money sent from Nicaraguans working in the U.S. back home to their families. For Nicaragua, this money brings more into the economy than exports. And on a human level, it is what allows many families to survive.

THE ELECTION

The lead-up to the November 5th elections was not without justified criticism. Ortega and former PLC president Arnoldo Alemán, better known politically as a law in 1999 known as The Pact that secured its continued control of the government and lowered the percentage of votes needed to win the election, thus giving Ortega the advantage he needed to win. The Pact was promoted as both from further investigation of criminal charges against Alemán for stealing millions from Nicaraguan coffers and against Ortega for sexual abuse charges from his stepfather. Campaigns were dirty, and voted to help that voting documents were being withheld from some people on a partisan basis. For these reasons, observation for the election was essential and overwhelming. There were approximately 17,000 observers on November 5th, or 1.7 per polling location. National and international.

Continued on page 6
Twenty Years After Iran-Contra, Washington's Role in Nicaragua Still a Scandal

By Mark Weisbrot

Imagine Osama bin Laden visiting the United States ten or fifteen years from now, telling Americans who want to avoid getting hurt that it would never happen, but in Nicaragua something very similar happened in the run-up to their election on November 5.

Former US Lt. Col. Oliver North, who helped organize and raise funds for a terrorist organization that decimated Nicaragua in the 1980s, returned to that country's ground zero in late October to warn the citizens there against re-electing Daniel Ortega.

Ortega first came to power in a 1979 revolution led by the Sandinistas, which overthrew the brutal Washington-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza. The Somoza family had ruled the country since US Marines invaded and occupied Nicaragua in 1927.

But the US Central Intelligence Agency soon bought guns and money to the enforcers of the toppled dictatorship, Somoza's hated National Guard. Before long these re-named “contras” were killing health care workers, teachers, and elected officials—the CIA actually prepared a manual which advocated the assassination of the latter. The Contras preferred attacking these “soft targets” rather than the national armed forces. In that sense they were very much a terrorist organization; they also used torture and rape as political weapons.

Think of Social Security in the United States. As my grandfather Max Naiman told Studs Terkel in his book Hard Times, the activists who fought for the passage of Social Security legislation in the 30s “were called every bad name you could think of.”

In the last six years we witnessed the best political moment for trying to dismantle the Social Security system in the United States. Yet privatization advocates never succeeded in undermining the broadly accepted notion that every worker in the United States is entitled to a minimum income in retirement.

If this kind of social consensus could be achieved in Venezuela, it would be a permanent step forward for the majority. Every escualido who actively opposes the entire social reform project drains resources from the project. Conversely, every escualido who supports the broad reform project strengthens it. It might be hard to imagine such support now when you hear some of the derisive rhetoric of some of the escualidos against their less privileged compatriots.

Reasons for Hope

But there are some signs that a significant shift is possible. In the presidential campaign that was just fought in Venezuela, the opposition did not directly challenge the social reforms that have extended access to education and health care. Instead, the signature campaign promise of the opposition was that they would issue cards to every Venezuelan that would entitle them to a direct individual share of the country’s oil wealth. If you mention this proposal to a Chavista they will roll their eyes. But the proposal, like decision of the opposition to participate in the electoral process and accept the result, suggests a shift. Some in the opposition are starting to accept the new political reality of Venezuela. They are not going to overthrow the government by force. They are not going to bring it down by economic sabotage. The US is not going to invade nor succeed in undermining the government by funding opposition groups. Nor the same court where the US has failed and the Congress to cut it off. That’s where Ollie North came in: on behalf of the Reagan Administration, he illegally sold arms to Iran and used the proceeds to fund the Contras. This became the infamous “Iran-Contra” scandal of twenty years ago.

But the US Central Intelligence Agency soon brought guns and money to the enforcers of the toppled dictatorship, Somoza’s hated National Guard. Before long these re-named “contras” were killing health care workers, teachers, and elected officials—the CIA actually prepared a manual which advocated the assassination of the latter. The Contras preferred attacking these “soft targets” rather than the national armed forces. In that sense they were very much a terrorist organization; they also used torture and rape as political weapons.

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Prior to the election the US firm Evans/McDonough did an extensive poll of the Venezuelan population, on the election and other issues. The poll showed, not surprisingly, that three-quarters of the well-off planned to vote for the opposition. But there is another way to look at this: one in every four well-off people planned to vote for Chavez.

A Quaker was once asked if she was discouraged that only a fifth of the US population opposed the Reagan Administration’s unprovoked bombing of Libya. She said, “Our task is to make that opposition more visible.” If the escualidos supporters of the social reform project become more visible, it would be a great thing for the future of the country.

For example: the Venezuelan government has proposed making community service a requirement for all university students. Instead of grieving, these students could organize themselves. They could say, we’re willing to do community service, but we want to have a role in shaping it, we want to be involved in democratic process without violence, it can happen elsewhere. As such a process involves more countries, it will become progressively easier, as these countries can rely on each other’s trade and assistance. Already Venezuela has enough medical students that it may be soon able to replace the Cuban doctors here. Eventually, Venezuela, like Cuba, could export doctors and teachers around the world.

North was convicted of various felonies for his Iran-Contra crimes, but never served time because his conviction was overturned due to a technicality on appeal. In 1990, the Sandinistas were voted out of office by a public weary of war, with President George H.W. Bush making it clear that the violence would continue if the Sandinistas were re-elected. US Central Intelligence Agency analysts warned that “relations with our country have been limited and damaged when the Sandinistas have been in power” and Republican Congressman Dana Rohrabacher warned that “American interests are at stake here” since the Nicaraguan government “has been mobilized” and the United States would “condemn” the government if it won the elections, as he handily did.

U.S. officials’ intervention went so far as to prompt a public rebuke from the Organization of American States, which asked them to stay out of the election. Meanwhile, millions of US taxpayer dollars are funding “democracy promotion” activities in Nicaragua, which have previously been used to influence elections there. And TV commercials showed footage of corpses from the 1980s war, a warning of what might happen if Nicaragua elected “wrong” way. Wash-ington’s intervention in this election remains—as it was in the 1980s—an international disgrace for the United States.

This article is an updated version of one that was published on November 3 in the Bergen County Record (NJ)—and the Passaic County HeraldNews.
Colonized Wombs? Reproduction Rights and Puerto Rican Women

Antonia Darder

Observing the Nicaraguan Elections

Following World War II, Puerto Rico and the rest of the Third World emerged as a problem for U.S. philanthropists, foreign policy makers, and social scientists to solve. A major concern of the times was that Third World populations were too poor, making them easily vulnerable to communist tendencies. To prevent such a turn of events, Puerto Rico’s poverty was perceived as a real danger to U.S. interests. The consequence was an abrupt expansion of the U.S. academic, military, political, and economic intervention into the everyday life of Puerto Ricans. This intervention was carried out under the code word “development,” the modern paradigm for the new colonialism.

Puerto Rico became the explicit “laboratory” in which development efforts—foreign aid, industrialization, and population control—were tested as global policy. The wombs of Puerto Rican women served as an object for the projection of political and economic interests. Liberals longed to rescue Puerto Rican women, whom they perceived as victims of their men and their many children. For conservatives, Puerto Rican women were “demon mothers” whose dangerous fecundity could only be halted with aggressive measures—sterilization, high doses of hormones, and perhaps even surgical sterilization in the water. In both cases, the sexuality and reproduction of Puerto Rican women were seen as the great culprit of poverty, rather than the exploitative foreign policies of colonization that catered to U.S. political economic interests on the island. Accordingly, poverty in Puerto Rico was blamed on overpopulation. Hence, Operation Bootstrap, formulated in the late 1940s, was founded precisely on this belief. Two major components to the policy were incorporated in efforts to ameliorate overpopulation on the island.

First, migration of Puerto Ricans to the mainland was encouraged, resulting in over 50% of Puerto Ricans living off the island by 1970. This served to ensure Puerto Rico’s dependence on relations with the U.S. and to provide a low-wage workforce on the mainland. Second was a direct attack on reproduction. Government officials, public health officials, hospital administrators, missionaries, and social workers encouraged the use of contraceptives and surgical sterilization. By 1969, 35% of all Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age had undergone the operation.

Operation Bootstrap was carried out by the “modern” generation with its belief in the value of scientific, expert knowledge and faith in the “development” plan. Governor Luis Muñoz Marín’s fear of leading the island into economic ruin was the primary impetus for the establishment of this untenable alliance with U.S. academics, missionaries, and philanthropists. All who, along with Muñoz Marín, fiercely stood by the belief that population control was the only viable solution to the growing economic demise of the island.

Simultaneously, the political, economic and social structures of the island became firmly anchored on U.S. export-led industrialization. Factories, that employed disproportionate numbers of women, were considered the primary engines of economic growth. Accordingly, women employed outside the home increased by 21% each decade between 1940—1960, while the labor participation of Puerto Rican men dropped from 80% in 1930 to 60% by 1975.

As development policies warily destroyed agriculture in favor of wage labor and government subsidies, unemployment increased and cheap airfares were made available to those wanting to leave for the mainland. This combination of events spurred massive exodus of Puerto Rican men to the States. But despite the growing number of Puerto Rican women utilizing birth control or undergoing sterilization, the self-submission of the people decreased. As a consequence, dependence on welfare aid steadily increased as the island was turned into a welfare economy—by 1990, 75% of all Puerto Ricans were on some sort of public assistance program.

In the midst of Cold War politics, U.S. colonialism did not emerge as a politically popular answer for Puerto Rican poverty—but overpopulation did. From the eugenicist movement to population policy to sterilization, the sexuality and reproduction of poor and working class women became the battleground upon which the meaning of U.S. presence on the island was forged. However, it must be noted that the language of overpopulation dominated the political and public health landscape of Puerto Rico throughout its history as a colony. The ill of the “natives” always led to sexuality, as officials targeted venereal disease, prostitution, and immoral sexual conduct as key areas for reform.

Hence, the interiorization of Islanders was systematicaly produced through racialized, gendered, and class-bound moralisms attached to the wombs of Puerto Rican women. Throughout the last century, Puerto Rican difference was represented both in popular culture and public policy debates through women’s sexuality and reproduction. The fertility of Puerto Rican women was considered dangerous to the interests of the capitalist state—thus, in need of suppression and control.

Out-of-control reproduction and sexuality were used to defend the necessity of colonialism in Puerto Rico, promoting U.S. regulation and governance of the island as inevitable. As such, Puerto Rican women were considered the prime choice for innovative birth control research. Consequently, Puerto Rican reproduction and its response to family-planning interventions were carefully monitored with the intention to produce a model of population control for the rest of the Third World.

But there is another unfortunate aspect to this scenario that cannot be ignored. Whether through scientific claim, political rhetoric, or religious orthodoxy, the existence of Puerto Rican women has been defined almost exclusively in terms of sexuality and reproduction. More often than not, even in liberal circles, this relied extensively on paradigms of victimization, rendering Puerto Rican feminism as either non-existent or always in a state of co-optation. This is most apparent in the U.S. Feminist Movement, where narrow depictions of the use of sterilization by Puerto Rican women was consistently framed simply as a matter of U.S. imperialism. Missing from this popular mainstream feminist interpretation was the fact that Puerto Rican feminists were instrumental to passage of the 1937 bill that legalized birth control and sterilization in Puerto Rico. In fact, feminist leaders and Independista, Carmen Rivera de Alvarado, allowed herself to be arrested to test the bill standing under federal law. Also missing from the discourse was the history of contentious struggles between Puerto Rican feminists and the Catholic Church over the right to birth control on the island. Interestingly, the church also framed the sterilization debate in terms of U.S. imperialism.

This view is not meant to absolve the U.S. government or capitalist’s interventions in Puerto Rico or other parts of the world. It is rather to stress the need for greater complexity in understanding the struggle of Puerto Rican woman for reproductive rights, in the midst of neocolonialist rhetoric and changing social and material conditions.

Moreover, it bespeaks the caution that must be taken in progressive efforts to universalize and authorize U.S. feminist politics, by squeezing out a narrative from the bodies of Puerto Rican women—many of whom have openly testified that the decision to undergo a operation was an act of their self-determination. Also, it calls for a politics of mobilization and solidarity that refuses to homogenize the histories of Puerto Rican women—opening the road to democratizing the reproduction rights struggle in this country, at a time when these rights are most under attack at the federal level.

This is a slightly modified version of an article that appeared in Laura Briggs’s edited volume Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico (2002)
helicopters flew throughout the city. Oaxacans were expecting them. Days before, rumors of the police takeover had spread throughout the highlands, cities and coast of Oaxaca. Groups of people from every corner of Oaxaca had come to the city to defend it from the government forces. The barricades were reinforced. School buses were placed in the middle of streets. Tires, chairs, pieces of wood, doors, anything and everything were used to stop the federal government's repressive forces to enter. At the same time, however, the radio announcers coordinated the resistance and desperately called for a national peaceful insurrection to stop the government offensive. The Oaxacan people had agreed to resist peacefully, so as the tanks entered they would gather at each entrance by the hundreds trying to intimidate the police activity. Someone would burn tires in order to prevent the visibility of the helicopters. Some would fearlessly jump on the tanks and spray paint on the windows to disable them. Many times they were successful, many times they were not. At the end of the day, dozens were imprisoned and taken to the army headquarters, dozens disappeared, many were injured and at least four were found dead. The police forces secured the center plaza displacing all the resistance to the Autonomous University of Oaxaca where legally the state could not enter.

A few days later, on November 2, in an attempt to demolish the university radio station, the radio, nationally and internationally we followed the resistance. We heard the Oaxacans battling, calling for reinforcement, for vinegar and coke to wipe the tear gas from their faces, for solidarity across the globe. This time however, after hours of confrontation, the police forces within the Oaxacan universities organized what seemed impossible: the unarmed resistance for a government of the people and for the people. We heard through the radio a shrill scream of a woman saying, "Comrades today we are filled with glory. There are present a million people. We defeated them. We defeated them. We want Ulises Ruiz to leave Oaxaca right now and never to return because we will kick him out like we did today with the police forces." The Day of the Dead battle, however, would be the last massive organized act of resistance. From then on, the Mexican government secured the Oaxacan capital by promoting a politics of repression any act of organized defiance by the Oaxacans popular assembly. Furthermore, the virtual police state is reinforced through paramilitary forces, referred to as "death squads," who police the streets of the city intimidating and threatening any participant in the popular assembly or any sympathetic civilians.

On November 25, as the popular assembly marched towards the downtown Zocalo to once again demand the resignation of Ulises, the federal police confronted them with full force, gunfire and the nailed violence of the state. Hundreds were killed and hundreds wounded. This day marked the inauguration of the federal government witch-hunt throughout the state. In several regions of Oaxaca, illegal searches and detentions were reported. The federal police went as far as to enter forcefully into elementary schools to detain teachers that had participated in the strike. At this moment the government has forced the popular assembly into clandestinity, closing avenues for peaceful public protest. Today, the APPO's demands are not only for the governor to resign, but also for dignity. They will not stop until the illegitimate government of Ulises Ruiz steps down from office. Additionally, APPO's initiative of nationalizing the movement has already been taken up by many organizations throughout the country, including the Zapata Rebel Arm (EZLN), Likewise, in a solidarity move throughout Mexico and the United States, popular assemblies are emerging and protesting against the repressive politics of the Mexican government. This past October in Los Angeles, California, various indigenous groups, members of the Binational Front of Indigenous Organizations (PIOB), together with the Mexican and Mexican-American organizations like Union del Barrio and UCLA's Raza Graduate Students formed a transnational APPO. Today this movement is the largest grassroots movement in Mexico since the 1968 student movement and promises to grow. We look once again to the South, where dignity infuses the global struggle for justice.

Just Goodbye
by Darrin Drla

Musician, art-activist and longtime local Darrin Drla will be moving to the Bay Area in January to pursue an impractical masters degree in Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness. As much as he will miss C-U, he plans on having a glorious time learning precisely how much he doesn't know, discovering questions to those age-old answers about the universe and why it smells the way it does, and coming home to a united state of mind, and to the earth on which we stand.

As long-time residents know (and newcomers will hopefully discover), there are many treasures to be unearthed here, from the bountiful farmer's market to the eclectic community radio station, from the vibrant music and arts scene to one of the most active Independent Media Centers in the world — housed in a pillared, three-story government building, no less! Indeed, the list of perks seems to grow longer by the day. In the end, however, it all comes down to personal connections. Let's take it to the bridge:

Lifelong friends, my precious gems
Shining sapphire blue
And the love of my life here by my side
is a dream that came true.

Alas, Joni loses me on the last couple of lines (clarification forthcoming in a not-very-dramatic miniseries). But surely the sentiment, I hope, is a dream that came true. The lyrics this time are mine. The lyrics this time are mine. The sentiment, I hope, is a dream that came true.

The Oaxacan People's Insurrection for Dignity

Continued from page 1

THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT'S STATE OF EMERGENCY

The Day of the Dead battle, however, would be the last massive organized act of resistance. Thereafter, the Mexican government secured the Oaxacan capital by promoting a politics of terror organized by the federal police who would ensure "social order" by silencing and repressing any act of organized defiance by the Oaxacans popular assembly. Furthermore, the virtual police state is reinforced through paramilitary forces, referred to as "death squads," who police the streets of the city intimidating and threatening any participant in the popular assembly or any sympathetic civilians.

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Today this movement is the largest grassroots movement in Mexico since the 1968 student movement and promises to grow. We look once again to the South, where dignity infuses the global struggle for justice.