

# Report

## Nicaragua: Camilo Mejia Analyzes the Soft Coup Attempt

*By Rick Sterling, investigative journalist and current board president of Task Force on the Americas*

Western media has described the unrest and violence in Nicaragua as a “campaign of terror” by government police and paramilitary. This has also been asserted by large non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In May, for example, Amnesty International issued a report titled *Shoot to Kill: Nicaragua’s Strategy to Repress Protest*. A Miami Herald op-ed summarized, “It’s not like there’s any confusion over who’s to blame for the recent killings amid Nicaragua’s political violence. Virtually all human rights groups agree that Ortega’s police-backed paramilitary goons are the culprits.”

Much less publicized, other analysts have challenged these assertions. They claimed the situation is being distorted and the reality is very different. For example, Camilo Mejía wrote an open letter condemning the Amnesty report for being biased and actually contributing to the chaos and violence.

To learn more about the situation, Task Force on the Americas (TFA) invited Camilo Mejía to speak in the San Francisco Bay Area. TFA has a long history of work in Central and South America educating the public, lobbying around US foreign policy and leading delegations to see the reality in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Veteran for Peace (VFP) agreed to co-sponsor events with Camilo in San Francisco and Oakland. Veterans for Peace also has a long history with Nicaragua. VFP was founded partially in response to US aggression in Central America. VFP members protested US shipments to the Nicaraguan *Contras*. VFP member Brian Willson had both legs cut off when a train carrying weapons destined for Central America ran over him. The current VFP president,

Gerry Condon, was at that protest and helped stop the blood gushing from Willson’s severed legs. Brian Willson lives in Nicaragua today.

Camilo Mejía was born in Nicaragua, the son of famous musician Carlos Mejía Godoy. His mother was a staunch Sandinista activist but separated from the father soon after his birth. She brought Camilo to the United States as a single mother in 1994, four years after the Sandinista electoral defeat. Living in Florida, Camilo struggled to make ends meet and joined the US Army to pay for college. Just a few months before completing his service, Camilo was ordered into the 2003 invasion of Iraq. After serving one tour of duty, he refused to return and was imprisoned for nine months.

Camilo was honored as a “Prisoner of Conscience” by Amnesty International. Thus Camilo’s criticism of the Amnesty report on Nicaragua has special significance. Camilo is Nicaraguan, a member of Veterans for Peace, and a hero to both VFP and Amnesty. He is also the author of the compelling autobiography *Road from Ar Ramadi*.

As news of Camilo’s upcoming visit to San Francisco spread, we started to feel a reaction. There is a large and diverse Nicaraguan exile community in San Francisco. While some support the Sandinista government, others are adamantly opposed and some even supported the *Contras* decades ago. Anti-Ortega Nicaraguan exiles in San Francisco began organizing a protest.

Camilo’s visit to speak on Nicaragua also prompted a reaction from some Americans who had once supported the Sandinistas but now support the opposition. They campaigned to have their viewpoint presented at our events. TFA and VFP organizers thought there was



*Camilo Mejia speaking in Oakland, Photos Bill Hackwell*

no need to include the opposition voice since their characterization of the conflict is widespread. However Camilo wanted to be transparent and not exclude the opposition. He thought that if we allowed an opposition supporter to speak briefly, they were more likely to listen to his analysis and he could directly address their concerns.

At the San Francisco event, protesters arrived early in front of the War Memorial Veterans Building

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When the event started, protesters flooded into the venue. As promised, an opposition supporter was invited to speak briefly. The audience of about 120 was split between those who wanted to hear Camilo and those who came to protest. Camilo's talk was repeatedly interrupted and police arrived to prevent violence. Camilo asked whether this is the kind of "democracy" they claim to want for Nicaragua when they would not listen or allow him to speak here in San Francisco.

Camilo showed two short video clips. The first video showed opposition activists torturing a Sandinista supporter under the oversight of a Catholic priest and the remains of a Sandinista burned alive.

A second video showed a statement from an American who has lived in Nicaragua for many years. He described how gangs had invaded his town, set up road blocks, intimidated and abused local civilians. He described the joy of the community when the roadblocks were removed and masked "protesters" departed.

The audience got increasingly disruptive during the question period. A prominent Nicaraguan opposition supporter came forward, offering to quiet the disrupters. After receiving the microphone from Camilo, she did the opposite. The disruptions escalated and the event had to be ended early. The protesters had completed their mission: they had prevented Camilo from being able to present his perspective.

Organizers from TFA and Veterans for Peace decided the Sunday event in Oakland needed to be handled differently. Members of Veterans for Peace, including chapter president Paul Cox and

others prevented the protesters from entering. Ultimately the venue was packed with interested listeners. The anti-Ortega crowds protested on the sidewalk and street but were not able to



*Camilo Mejia speaking in San Francisco*

disrupt the event.

With the loud opposition outside, Camilo was introduced by VFP President Gerry Condon. He gave a clear and concise history of key events in Nicaraguan political history, beginning with the California gold rush of the mid-1800s which gave rise to the idea of a trans-oceanic passage through Nicaragua. This in turn focused US imperial interest in the country, so that when Cesar Sandino launched a guerrilla war in the 1920s and 30s it had two priorities: advancing the working class and anti-imperialism. Decades later the *Frente Sandinista* carried out the 1979 revolution, which was followed by the brutal US *contra* war against Nicaragua. Hoping for an end to the war, Nicaraguans voted the Sandinistas out of office in the 1990 election. The *Frente* split and ultimately Sergio Ramirez formed the splinter group *Movimiento Renovador Sandinista* (MRS). The more affluent members plus intellectuals, writers, and musicians gravitated toward it, but though they were well connected to western solidarity activists, they had neither popular platform nor base. They won very few votes in elections (never more than a few percent) and moved toward neoliberal policies and the NGO world.

Since taking power in 2007, Daniel Ortega and the *Sandinistas* have improved living conditions for the poor with free healthcare, free education and better economic policies. Nicaragua now supplies 80 - 90% of its own food needs. And up until April, Nicaragua was vastly safer than neighboring countries. Their community policing is considered a model. Unsurprisingly, support for Ortega and the *Frente Sandinista* has steadily increased. In 2006, they won

38% of the vote; in 2011, it increased to 62%; in 2016 it increased to 72% with 68% turnout.

There has been much misinformation about the proposed changes in social security said to have sparked the protests in April, although the facts are straightforward. To stabilize the social security funding, the IMF wanted to implement an austerity plan which would have doubled the work requirements and raised the qualification age from 60 to 65. The Sandinista counterproposal was much more progressive, requiring wealthy individuals and businesses to pay much more into social security with minor changes for others.

Moreover, the death count from the recent violence has been manipulated. Some deaths are counted twice; people who were said to be dead have turned up alive; dead Sandinista supporters have been counted as protesters. The first deaths on April 19 were one student, one police officer and one bystander killed by sniper fire. Camilo questions whether this was done by the government or by outside forces.

At the Oakland event, Camilo showed a torture video which demonstrates opposition violence. He also showed video of the huge July 19 celebration of the anniversary of the revolution. His talk was followed by many questions including from opposition supporters.

At times during the event, there was tension and concern about violence from the protesters outside. Some Nicaraguan families were afraid for their safety. After the event, they had to be escorted with protection to their cars. The car of one Nicaraguan family was besieged by the anti-Ortega crowd. Camilo and his young daughter had to be quickly taken away amidst shouts and waving placards.

Ultimately Camilo's visit accomplished the goal. Media interviews in Spanish and English reached many thousands. In these and the public presentations, he brought information and analysis which has been largely censored or ignored in coverage of Nicaragua.

Camilo believes Nicaragua has temporarily defeated a soft coup attempt but the danger is not over. The opposition forces internally and internationally are still there.

Source: *Task Force on the Americas*, August 28, 2018

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## COLOMBIA: Peace or More War?



Children continue to suffer from war in Colombia.  
Photo: Pablo Serrano

**By Alice Loaiza, Task Force board member and member of Marcha Patriótica Colombia (California Chapter)**

Hope for progressive change was in the air during the recent presidential election campaign in Colombia, and even though Gustavo Petro, the progressive *Humana* Coalition candidate lost, he won an unprecedented 42% in the hotly contested election. These results show the massive support there is for the Peace Accords and an end to state violence in the country. It was a vote against the ultra right of Alvaro Uribe, through his candidate, Iván Duque.

During his tenure as mayor of Bogotá, Petro was considered an honest and somewhat independent center-left leader, which was enough to make him a daily target for demonization by the dominant right-wing mass media. A steady stream of hysteria against him was able to persuade many that a vote for Petro would turn Colombia into another Venezuela. This well-orchestrated campaign, formulated in Washington as always, was intended to make Venezuela the most urgent enemy of Colombia, even though six million Colombians live legally in Venezuela.

The new President of Colombia, Iván Duque, is the handpicked and formerly unknown successor of the criminal and reactionary ex-president, Álvaro Uribe. Duque was chosen to stand in for Uribe who cannot run again. Uribe is presently being investigated for his direct relationship to the paramilitaries, who continue to operate all over the

country with impunity. It is unlikely that Duque will confront these illegal organizations that the state uses to control peasant and popular organizing. Duque's orders are clear: destroy the Peace Accords between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed in 2016, amp up the hostility against Venezuela, and collaborate with the Organizations of American States (OAS) to strengthen further Colombia's ties with the

US.

Colombia is more than a strategic friend to US interests in Latin America. It is pivotal to the increasing US efforts to control who is in power in the entire region, offering a staging ground for the Pentagon's eight military bases on Colombian soil to threaten and lord over the Americas. It goes without saying that these bases also provide security for the multinational corporations exploiting Colombia's considerable natural resources. The Colombian right is backed by a very effective and well-armed military and police force built by the US through Plan Colombia.

Ultimately the future of Colombia will depend on the building, unification, and strengthening of grassroots organizations and left movements in connection with regional networks throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

The people of Colombia have a long history of struggle for a better life and it is important to look back at that movement. It took a long time and a lot of work to begin organizing again in Colombia after the thousands of assassinations of candidates and supporters of the Patriotic Union (a left opposition party) in the 1980s and 1990s. But in spite of the growth of the right-wing paramilitary forces, combined with extrajudicial murders by the military, repeated internal displacement, constant aerial fumigation with glyphosate, hunger, and neglect by the government, the Colombian people rallied. Peasants who had suffered under harsh repression came together to strengthen their community organizations and demand their rights. Students rose in

solidarity and fought for free public education. In urban areas the newly displaced went to the streets.

In the early 2000's people continued to resist and formed the National Coordination of Agrarian and Popular Organizations (CONAP, 2007), which brought together organizations of struggle from all over the country. It was the first time in years that social organizations were able to sit together and talk about their conditions and plan a national resistance. Many of the areas of the country had similar demands, such as land reform, respect for the environment, schools, roads, medical attention, peace in the communities, no more disappearances or assassinations and an end to the paramilitary armies.

The struggle also began to include environmental struggles such as those against the coal and oil companies and the government's aerial fumigation campaigns. Another demand was for peace, as Colombia had experienced more than 40 years of war between the guerrillas and the government.

The Peace Accord was signed in 2016 after four years of negotiations in Havana, Cuba. The right wing led by Álvaro Uribe, (president of Colombia 2002-2010), opposed the Accord, calling for a referendum based on a cascade of misinformation and lies. He used the evangelical churches (backed by the US) to scare people by saying they would be invaded by homosexuals if the FARC were to be integrated into the political system. But in the end the Accord was signed between the government and the FARC-EP guerrillas. Unfortunately, the agreement signed has not been honored by the government and the right continues to oppose its content.

Since the signing of the Peace Accord, conditions in Colombia have worsened for the poor sectors of society, which, of course, is the majority. Land reform and restitution to victims of violence have not occurred. Freedom of political participation has not been honored. It is not safe for local leaders to participate in elections. Paramilitary groups have grown and moved in to dominate the areas that previously had been protected by the armed FARC

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## Honduras: NLG Demands Justice for Berta Cáceres

July 25, 2018

Poder Judicial de Honduras  
 Hon. Rolando Edgardo Argueta Pérez  
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The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) is the oldest and largest legal association dedicated to human rights and the public interest in the United States, with chapters in each state. Since its foundation, the NLG has maintained an internationalist perspective and seeks to promote the adaptation of, and adherence to, international law in all nations. We have sent numerous delegations to Honduras, and we continue to note the impunity for human rights violations tolerated by Honduran authorities. The NLG urges the Honduran judiciary to conduct a fair and impartial trial process for defendants charged in the murder of Berta Cáceres in order to ensure that truth and justice prevail. The eyes of the world are on Honduras as it confronts this emblematic case.

Cáceres was more than an environmentalist and indigenous rights activist. Her role as a key social movement and human rights leader within Honduras and internationally made her a target of systematic and ongoing intimidation, harassment, and criminalization by the powerful forces who felt threatened by her effective advocacy and culminating in her murder on March 2, 2016. The judicial proceedings for Cáceres' assassination must evaluate not only what transpired on the day of her murder, but also the systematic persecution that she faced, as well as the defendants' roles in the criminal structure that conspired to assure her voice was eliminated. To that end, at the evidentiary hearing scheduled to start on July 27, 2018, it is vital that all evidence be admitted that addresses the context of persecution Cáceres faced leading up to her death in order to uncover the criminal structure that carried out her murder.

We are extremely concerned to hear that the Public Prosecutor's Office has failed to comply with the multiple Court orders to provide information to the lawyers for both the victims and the defendants, and that the trial may be allowed to start without this vital evidence being provided to all parties. Repeated requests for access to this evidence through legal channels have proven futile. This refusal of the Public Ministry to provide the information jeopardizes the rights of the victims to redress of their grievances and the rights of the defendants to prepare their defense, and once again sets the stage for continued impunity.

Cáceres' case exemplifies the grave risks confronted by those who defend their communities, territories and human rights, all of whom are vulnerable persons that the State has an obligation to protect, particularly in such cases where the Inter-American Human Rights Commission has ordered the Honduran government to institute protective measures. The importance of assuring a fair judicial process with a full and transparent accounting for all persons responsible for Cáceres' murder, including the intellectual authors, is vital to send a clear signal to criminal elements that the Honduran State can in fact uphold the rule of law. We sincerely hope this Court will impart complete justice in this instance and not contribute to further perpetuate impunity, instability and more violence.

Sincerely, Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan, President, National Lawyers Guild

For the latest on the trial go to: [www.hondurassolidarity.org](http://www.hondurassolidarity.org)

## Letters from Honduran Political Prisoners

On August 30, The Appeals Court rejected the appeals in Edwin Espinal and Raúl Alvarez's case and upheld their pretrial detention. They have now been in jail for seven months.

A couple of weeks ago from La Tolva prison, Edwin and Raúl wrote open letters with messages of hope, solidarity and struggle:

Comrades,  
 Thank you for all of your solidarity. These actions are what give us strength to survive in this hole, where we're constantly harassed as a form of psy-

chological and emotional torture. But that's not enough to silence us or make us desist from our struggle. Now more than ever we want to continue struggling by your side.

- Edwin Espinal

Comrades,  
 Greetings with affection from prison. I ask that you stay strong in our struggle. Don't tire or falter. Our country needs brave people for it to progress. Soon

we'll be in the city with you to achieve the long-awaited victory that was stolen from us by the corrupt and sell-out politicians that we've had. May God bless Honduras and our comrades who struggle, the defenders of our homeland. I have lost my freedom but not my will to keep going for my country, HONDURAS.

- Raúl Eduardo Alvarez Ordoñez

Follow their case here: [FreeEdwinEspinalLibertad.blogspot.com](http://FreeEdwinEspinalLibertad.blogspot.com)

## No More Media and Judicial Persecution of our Leaders

■ **INTELLECTUALS**  
and **ARTISTS**  
in **DEFENSE**  
of **HUMANITY**



*They can cut a thousand flowers, but they can't stop the spring....*

The Network of Intellectuals, Artists and Social Movements in Defense of Humanity calls attention to the strategic interest of overthrowing the progressive and revolutionary governments of our region by the local oligarchies aligned with the United States.

They intend to bring down the popular governments that are standing, to dismantle the advances in Latin American unity and to annul the leaderships that have been constituted because this can be electoral processes for the return of progressive and revolutionary forces where they have managed to remove them through institutional coups d'état or pre- or post-electoral frauds and scams. They go so far as to attempt the destruction of moral and historical references of leaders who are no longer with us like Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez and Néstor Kirchner.

The hegemonic media carry out a media lynching of the popular leaders

with which they target the psychological ground in the masses so that the judiciary can then advance in its persecution and prosecution.

Like in the cases of Lula in Brazil and Rafael Correa in Ecuador the architecture of impunity has been set into motion against the popular and progressive camp and now they are doing it to Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina as well as other former authorities and activists of her project. The impunity that gives them the right to occupy all the spaces of power, allows them to invent anything they like. They don't need proof. Their self assumed superiority gives them heir to white democracies' with which our nation states were forged in blood and fire, is enough justification.

As in Brazil, where all that was needed was the "conviction" by a judge, formatted in the United States, to proclaim Lula was guilty sending him to prison in order to prevent the popular preference for his candidacy for president from becoming a reality. Or in Ecuador where they are trying to annul Rafael Correa by trying to incriminate him in an alleged unsuccessful kidnapping of a proven criminal character. Or they can invent all sorts

of slanders confessed by businessmen who buy their impunity in exchange for accusations.

But when the evidence is convincing and points to its mercenaries or hit men, such as the drones that exploded near the Venezuelan president, it is not enough for the media monopolies to recognize that it was an obvious assassination attempt, and instead accuse their own victims. In the midst of countries in which the explosive mix of social consequences of neoliberal policies is forged, an offensive that is once again unleashed on those who represent social justice projects.

However, the popular rebellions are growing through all the veils of repressive and media shielding. That is why right-wing governments are continuously militarizing our societies in a preventive way. They obey Washington's intention to fill our territories with its military bases and to reform and unify military doctrines, with the return of the national security doctrine. They aim to redirect the military force towards supposed internal enemies.

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*Colombia, continue from page 3*

Community and human rights leaders are being killed almost daily, displacement is massive and many leaders who are constantly threatened are trying to leave the country. More than 300 community and human rights leaders have been assassinated in the last two years. This is a terrible and staggering fact that we never hear about in the corporate media. Imagine if this had happened in Venezuela.

Displacement through intimidation is another tactic of the right. A friend of mine, who is an Afro-Colombia organizer for *Marcha Patriótica* in the south of the country, recently told me that he is being constantly threatened and fears for his wife and three children. They are now in hiding and looking for a place to relocate.

Others are not so lucky. Just last month, in the small dusty town of El

Tarra, Catatumbo (near the Venezuelan border) nine people were gunned down by paramilitaries in an area supposedly guarded by the military. One was the Community Action leader, Frederman Quintero, and others were ex-guerrillas recently reintegrated into society by the Peace Accord. Meanwhile, the government claims there are no paramilitaries in the region, but the community sees another reality.

No one is ever accused or brought to justice for these acts. The government of Juan Manuel Santos, who just ended eight years of presidency, has denied the existence of the paramilitary as has Duque.

The people of Colombia never stop resisting. If their leaders are killed and intimidated, their children will step up. If the children are killed, their mothers will step up, like the mothers of the boys from Soacha (a town near Bogotá) who were killed by the

military just to get more money. There were thousands of "False Positives," young men taken off the streets by the army, put into a uniform and shot in order to claim them as killed in action (*The Guardian*). The mothers of these young men, who number in the thousands, demand justice.

Our purpose is solidarity, sharing the reality of Colombia and demanding the US leave.

Stop the arming of the military and police that kills and intimidates the people!

Stop US Corporation's exploitation of Colombia and remove the US military bases from Colombia!

History has shown that conditions can change quickly through struggle and resistance. The Colombian people know this well.

Source: *Task Force of the Americas*

## Haiti: Roots of an Uprising

By Robert Roth, educator and co-founder of Haiti Action Committee

*“The cauldron of corruption and lies has been boiling non-stop 24 hours a day. The time has come to overturn it, for Haitians to begin to see the light of peace. Haiti is for all Haitians.”*  
- Fanmi Lavalas statement,

July 8, 2018.

On July 6, 2018, Haiti exploded. By the tens of thousands, Haitians poured into the streets of Port-au-Prince to demand the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse. The protests were sparked by the government’s announcement that it would reduce or remove subsidies on fuel, leading to a rise of 38% in the price of gasoline, and that the price of kerosene would jump 50% to \$4.00 a gallon. The uprising spread across the country and lasted three days. Port-au-Prince was brought to a standstill. Protesters set up barricades in the streets, burned tires, and attacked stores owned by the rich. Luxury hotels in the Petionville area were sacked by angry demonstrators. In the immediate aftermath, the government rescinded the price increases (for now), and Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant, the same official who announced the fuel price hike resigned. A squad of US Marines was sent to Port-au-Prince, supposedly to increase security at the US Embassy, but also to send Haitians an ominous warning of what was to come should the protests continue.

The Moïse administration had waited until the World Cup to make the price hikes official in the vain hope that Haitians would be so preoccupied with the festivities that they would ignore this attack on their already precarious standard of living. But the writing had been on the wall since February, when the new Moïse government reached an agreement with the International Monetary Fund on an austerity package in exchange for \$96 million in loans. Even after the protests, the IMF insisted that the steep price rise was necessary but that the price increases should be introduced more gradually.



*Jail the thieves of the Petro Caribe Funds, Photo, haitiinfproj*

Clearly, the end of this story has not yet been written.

The powerful and militant popular upsurge caught the mainstream US media by surprise. Having ignored months of continuous demonstrations against the stolen elections that brought the current Haitian government to power, media outlets like the New York Times and Miami Herald could only guess at the underlying causes of the rebellion. CNN focused its reporting on the plight of US missionaries who were “trapped” in Haiti. Media coverage was replete with the usual racialized code words: “rioters”, “looters”, “violence”.

What was missing from the headlines was the fact that the Moïse government was already operating under a cloud of popular suspicion and anger long before the uprising. Birthed via two elections so replete with fraud and voter suppression that they were denounced as an “electoral coup” by opposition parties, the current Haitian government has no legitimacy among the population. The first round of elections in 2015 was annulled after weeks of mass protests backed by Fanmi Lavalas, the party of Haiti’s first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The overwhelmingly peaceful demonstrations were met by police clubs, chemical agents, tear gas and bullets, but the grassroots movement persisted, finally forcing the annulment, leading to a new round of presidential elections in October 2016. The new round was yet another charade, resulting in the inauguration of Jovenel

Moïse as the new president in February 2017.

Even before being installed as president, Moïse was implicated in a money laundering scheme after an investigation by Haiti’s banking watchdog agency. Dating back to 2012 when Moïse’s mentor, former president Michel Martelly, was in power, the money laundering is said to have garnered Moïse over five million. In one of his early acts as president, Moïse replaced the director of the investigating agency with one of his cronies for the purpose of suppressing the investigation. Peasant organizers have also spoken out against Moïse’s expropriation of land for his banana plantation in northern Haiti. Not only did small farmers lose land; Moïse’s much-heralded banana exporting business now appears to have been a short-lived election image gimmick. In reality, \$25,000 was spent to export only one container of bananas worth \$10,000 to Germany. This is part of a pattern where government officials tout projects, get funding, take over land, and then pocket the money rather than develop the country’s agriculture or infrastructure.

In addition, a massive scandal has been brewing over the outright theft of \$3.8 billion in Petrocaribe loans given to Haiti by the Venezuelan government. Yes, \$3.8 billion. These funds were supposed to lower energy costs and fund education, agriculture and infrastructure, but they ended up instead in the coffers of government officials, including members of Parliament. “Where is the Petrocaribe money?” Haitians demanded in an anti-government demonstration on August 24th. Where is the money for hospitals desperate for supplies of blood and in need of new medical equipment? Where is the money for education, as families prepare to send their children back to schools with reduced or non-existent subsidies for school supplies and uniforms?

In the Artibonite region, the center of Haitian agriculture, recent rains have led to dangerous floods due

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## Mexico: The Victory of AMLO and its Significance for the Indigenous Struggle

By Gilberto Lopez y Rivas, Mexican intellectual and anthropologist

Undoubtedly this is a historical moment in contemporary Mexico. In July, for the first time in many decades the popular will as expressed at the ballot box was respected; State fraud was not imposed, nor did the voting system fail, nor was there the cynical “whatever happened” of Felipe Calderón. This is a transcendent conquest by the Mexican people that, without diminishing or underestimating it, needs to be analyzed from the point of view of the struggle of the native peoples in defence of their territories, mother earth and life.

This transition is not due to a sudden democratic vocation of the PRI regime, but rather three interrelated factors that prevented the imposition of the traditional fraud by the State: 1) the extraordinary citizen participation of more than 60 % of the eligible voters; 2) the fracture of the political class of the main parties, the PRI and the PAN, which went separate ways in the election, both with their internal conflicts that deepened during the campaign; and 3) the vote by millions of voters who spoke for a change.

However, the election highlights the capacity of the State to reconstitute itself: the triumph of the massive intervention of the citizenship was quickly changed into a victory of the institutions and the democratic system. Long gone was the violence deployed throughout and during the electoral process; the 132 candidates killed were forgotten.

The recognition of the official candidate on the night of the election, and the smooth sequence of events that culminated with the message of Enrique Peña Nieto and the conciliatory speech of the winning candidate, suggests a concerted effort from which there will be no punishment for the state crimes against humanity perpetrated by the outgoing government, nor will there be criminal litigation of the visible plundering of the treasury and the evident complicity of the three levels of government with organized crime.

It is also significant that in his first



What will AMLO do for the Indigenous of Mexico? Photo: Bill Hackwell

speech as a winning candidate, Andres Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) sends a message to the capitalist corporations to reassure them that he will not take radical measures, contracts will be respected, and there will be no expropriation. It is in that context that we must refer to AMLO’s preferred slogan; *For the good of all, first the poor*, about which we must ask, *Who are the all?*

Also, the guiding-and-almost-unique idea of the whole campaign that corruption is the matrix of all the country’s ills was reiterated, denying that corruption is inherent in capitalism, whose cornerstone is the expropriation of the work of the working class and the dispossession of territories and natural and strategic resources by their corporations. The president-elect denies that the law of value/exploitation/surplus and value/class struggle applies to Mexico, insisting instead on the factor of corruption.

This peculiar perspective of López Obrador, which corrects the classics of Marxism, is very important for the direction of the resistance of the indigenous peoples against the process of recolonization of their territories by the transnational capitalists, which was made visible by the Indigenous Council of Government (CIG) and its spokesperson, Marichuy (Mexico’s First In-

igenous Woman Presidential Candidate) throughout the campaign. Mining, transsystemic corridors, refineries, road projects, bullet trains and a honeymoon with businessmen are bad signs for the 25 million indigenous people of Mexico.

On the other hand, leaders of indigenous organizations around AMLO presented a programmatic document with the phraseology of Zapatismo which, as a main proposal for returning to indigenism (already overcome since the dialogue of San Andrés) would form a new secretariat within the State under the leadership of an indigenous bureaucracy. [*The San Andrés Accords are agreements reached between the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the Mexican government, on February 16, 1996, in San Andrés Larráinzar, Chiapas, granting autonomy, recognition, and rights to the indigenous population of Mexico – editorial*].

Marichuy declared that the real significance of indigenous rights will come now and that the transcendent thing is to organize if we want to take the country towards a real change. It will be about resisting the capitalist corporations and the governments that protect them, acting from wherever we are, in neighborhoods, colonies, cities or indigenous communities.

The limit of representative democracy is that citizen participation is concentrated in a single day, from which public affairs are monopolized by a class of professional politicians who disregard the electorate. The EZLN and the CIG, on the other hand, propose a democracy of a new type, an autonomist democracy based on a construction of power and citizenship from below; as a way of everyday life, of control and exercise of power based on ethical terms. It is not a means or procedure of reproduction of bureaucratic estates, but a social and political pact, a constituency of every day that operates unitarily in all spheres and orders of life.

For this democracy, the struggle will continue, shoulder to shoulder with the people, from below and to the left.

Source: *La Jornada*, July 26, 2018

## VENEZUELA: It's Time to Take Advantage of the Failure of the Venezuelan "Bay of Pigs"

By Carlos Aznares, Editor of *Resumen Latinoamericano*

If a drone or two loaded with C4 explosives fly over a stage with President Nicolás Maduro and the Bolivarian military high command on it, and two of those devices are diverted from their main objective (to assassinate the President and many more), and crash or explode in the air and injure seven people attending the ceremony, can anyone in her right mind believe this is some sort of staged event or self-inflicted attack?

Almost at the same time as this foiled assassination attempt took place, inevitably the Miami pseudo-journalist Patricia Poleo, in a dramatic gesture, read a communiqué written by her usual group of conspirators who suggested the sinister idea of an attack against the President in the first place, a president, by the way, who has won several elections by a landslide. How is it possible that several countries calling themselves democracies, in Latin America and the world, pretend to be distracted and have not condemned the attack?

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, who has little or nothing of the "santo" (saint) in him, for inexplicable reasons of politics won the Nobel peace prize for a peace he sabotaged himself. It so happens that this Santos in nearly all his latest speeches, was pleased to pronounce sentence upon Maduro, saying that he "has little time left in the government." How can he continue to deny the seriousness of the attempted assassination in Caracas as an invention of those injured in the terrorist attack?

Kneeling before the empire, Luis Amargo of the Organization of American States (OAS), who was always so quick to condemn the great revolutionary progress made in Venezuela, has now become completely blind, deaf and mute in the face of an event that did not end in tragedy because all the gods protected Maduro and the revolution.



*The Bolivarian Militia stands with Maduro, Photo: Bill Hackwell*

The Gods, along with Venezuelan defense technology, stopped the drones from filling the streets of Caracas with dead.

It is clear that those who call this a self-attack and those who do not condemn the obvious were waiting to celebrate death. They themselves are death. And they promote it every day, starving and repressing their peoples, showing that in addition to their ability to apply lethal policies on a massive scale, they can count on the protection of judicial and often legislative powers that ensure their impunity. This is the order of the day, for Macri, Temer, Piñera, Peña Nieto, Jimmy Morales, Santos (and very soon Duque), Trump, Macrón, and the list goes on and on.

That is why they are determined to erase *chavismo* from the Venezuelan map, and after trying by all means (each more brutal than the last) they now want to show the world that they can go beyond all limits and kill those they've hated so much. It is because Venezuela, just as Cuba has always been, is the "bad example" where millions of people will not stop fighting back. They fight with the dignity of those who know themselves to be in the right, and with the same serenity that Maduro showed when the explosions began to be seen and heard from the presidential stage.

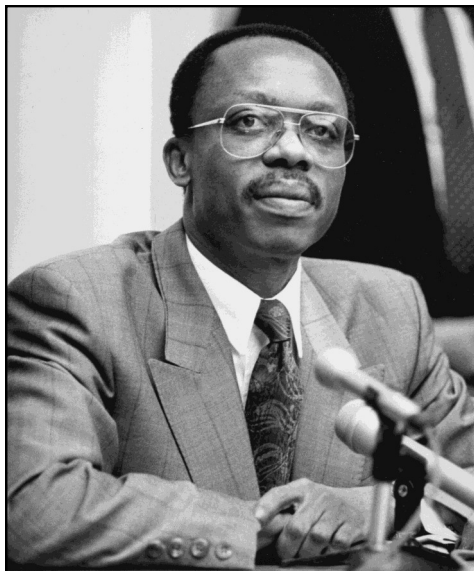
The Yankees, with their Southern Command, the OAS, the Santos-Uribe duet, and each of the bigwigs of the Lima Group, were left with nothing to celebrate, simply because the greatest shield Nicolás Maduro has are the Venezuelan people themselves. These masses suffer daily from the economic war and are the heroic survivors of the violent *guarimbas* of months ago. They are willing to come down from the hills as many times as necessary to defend a Revolution that belongs to them more than to anyone else.

In the face of this Venezuelan "Bay of Pigs," the government is emerging stronger and must take advantage of the adrenaline rush of internal and external solidarity to attack the conspirators, the coup plotters and the murderers of the people. At the same time it must generate the conditions to break the imperialist blockade and ensure that scarcity of food and medicine does not alienate those who now defend the Revolution with their own bodies. In these circumstances, doubt must be overcome and the advice of subordinates must escape from any notions of political correctness. The Revolution will be saved if it deepens its roots towards socialism. There is the recent example of the admirable Peasant March, when Maduro, Diosdado Cabello and Delcy Rodríguez met with the marchers and recognized their demands, the same demands as those of many popular sectors. (Admittedly, the meeting only took place after certain hesitations and attempts to make invisible those who had traveled on foot hundreds of kilometers.) It is now necessary to execute emergency plans so that the plantation system and hit men are treated as they should be: enemies of the Bolivarian people.

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*Former Haitian President Aristide, Photo, Bill Hackwell*

to neglected infrastructure, but sanitation workers have not yet been paid to clean up sewage canals and drains, while the hurricane season looms. In Port-au-Prince, police have burned down the stalls of market women, a particularly cruel form of gentrification tearing at the heart of Haiti's economic life and the foundation of so many families' ability to survive. Haiti's prisons are now bursting at the seams, with one epidemic after another sweeping through overcrowded, nightmarish cages.

When Haitians took to the streets in July, they were demanding an end to all of this. In essence, they were letting the government know that there would be no peace without justice. They went far beyond the call to curtail the fuel price increase, insisting that the Moïse government had to step down. The protests were a reminder that Haiti's popular movement, long the target of both the US government and the Haitian elite, remains viable and powerful. Despite two US-orchestrated coups against the administrations of former president Aristide, despite a sophisticated COINTELPRO-style campaign aimed at dividing and marginalizing Fanmi Lavalas and its allies, despite 14 years of United Nations military occupation,

despite stolen elections, and despite the grinding economic misery facing most Haitian families, the popular movement has persisted.

Why? This is a movement that has sunk its roots deep, and it remains the central force in the country capable of building an alternative to corruption and repression. During the years that Lavalas governments were in power, more schools were built than in the entire previous history of Haiti. Health clinics sprouted up throughout the country, as the Aristide administrations spent unprecedented amounts on health care. When the earthquake hit in 2010, killing over 300,000 and forcing over one million people to live under tarps in desperately overcrowded camps, it was grassroots activists who immediately went to work with limited funds to set up mobile health clinics and provide food supplies. In the wake of the devastation unleashed by Hurricane Matthew in 2016, Fanmi Lavalas organized caravans to provide aid to the affected regions. As living conditions have spiraled downwards, grassroots organizations have stood with the poor, backing striking teachers, garment workers and students, supporting market women as they defend themselves against government attack, increasing the reach of independent media to combat the lies of the elite-run radio and TV stations that dominate Haiti's airwaves.

One prime example of the movement's vision for a democratic and inclusive Haiti can be seen in the work of the University of the Aristide Foundation (UniFA). Founded in 2001 as President Aristide began a new term in office, UniFA's medical school was violently shut down after the 2004 coup, its campus taken over by US and UN occupying troops. When President Aristide and his wife and colleague Mildred Trouillot Aristide returned to Haiti in 2011 from forced exile in South Africa, he announced UniFA would be reopened and expanded. As promised, seven years to the day after the Aristides' return, UniFA held its first graduation ceremony. With over 1000 people in attendance, UniFA graduated 77 doctors, 46 nurses and 15 lawyers. Many of the graduates were recruited to the university from poor communities that have had little access to higher education. Already, UniFA doctors are working in areas that have

rarely, if ever, seen a doctor before. With 1600 students now studying in the fields of medicine, nursing, law, engineering, physical therapy, and continuing education, this is only the beginning, a microcosm of the kinds of advances Haiti could make with a true people's government in power. The contrast could not be more stark: education or militarism, democracy or authoritarian rule, inclusion or exclusion, development or corruption, self-determination or occupation. With the July uprising, the Haitian people have once again made known their choice.

*Ed. Note: Fanmi Lavalas is the party of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected president, and represents Haiti's poor majority.*

*Source: Haiti Action Committee, August 26, 2018*

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*Venezuela, continued from page 8*

This is a time of redefinition, just as when Hugo Chavez, as if back from the dead, returned from the military base in La Orchilain in 2002. We must not miss the opportunity presented by this second failure by the coup plotters. Nicolás Maduro has the great responsibility to lead this offensive to final victory, at whatever cost to the enemy, whether the declared enemies of Venezuela or those fifth columnists perched on *chavismo* itself: like those governors who order repression of the peasants and block their efforts to recover their land from the landlords, dubbing them "land invasions." This lesson is well-taught by Comandante Chávez. It is urgent that the ranks themselves be solidified and turned into impenetrable walls.

For those of us who consider the Bolivarian Revolution to be one of the fundamental battering rams to strike at the empire, we stand with the people and with Maduro.

*Source: Resumen Latinoamericano, translated by the North American bureau.*

## Cuba's Path to Same Sex Marriage

*By Father Geoff Bottoms, Anglican minister and leader of the Cuba solidarity movement in England*

Twenty-five years ago Cuba broke new ground with the first overtly gay film *Strawberry and Chocolate* directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío. Set in 1979 it is the story of a flamboyant gay artist Diego who attempts to seduce a straight and idealistic young communist called David but without success. David conspires to befriend Diego so that he can monitor the artist's subversive life for the state yet as they discuss politics and the nature of free artistic expression a genuine friendship develops between the two.

It could almost be a parable of the evolving promotion of gay rights in Cuba that has been on track for decades. Take for example the LGBTQ cultural center known as El Mejunje, meaning The Mixture, located in the center of the city of Santa Clara. Founded in 1985 it is an open space shared by everyone regardless of sexual orientation in order to promote social integration and includes a theater, a café, an art gallery and a small music venue with music ranging from rock and roll to Cuban folk. Activities also include social and cultural initiatives aimed at both children and adults, film screenings, and there is a LGBTQ disco every Saturday night.

Also, discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of sexual orientation is now illegal in both state and private sectors with recent legislation imposing fines and suspending the licenses of those employers who discriminate on the grounds of race, gender or sexuality. Sex-change operations were legalized as long ago as 2008 and are carried out at no cost to the patient with dozens being performed in the last year.

Yet the leading light in the campaign for gay rights has been Mariela Castro, the director of the National Centre for Sex Education

(CENESEX), who is a member of the National Assembly and daughter of former President Raúl Castro. CENESEX has been advocating same-sex marriage since 2007 and now Cuba is set to become the latest country in

wedding services or a blessing of civil unions. The Methodist Church is in the process of reviewing the whole concept of marriage which includes the possibility of gay weddings.

The problems about sexuality which continue to sap the churches' energies are really about gender. Early Christianity understood women's bodies to be inferior versions of the superior male body but this was replaced during the Enlightenment with a binary model which prevails to this day. As a result of this understanding a pattern of patriarchy, androcentrism and sexism emerged in both church and society that has been challenged by the both the sciences and the feminist movement which paved the way for a more enlightened attitude towards sex, gender and sexual orientation that is more fluid. It is in this context that marriage

is being evaluated so that even with a traditional understanding marriage is now seen more as an equal partnership than a question of the woman being subordinate to the man. All of which is a far cry from the bride's promise in the medieval marriage rite "to be bonny and buxom at bed and at board" where the relationship was bound up with the idea of property!

It remains to be seen whether Cuba's inclusion of same-sex marriage in the proposed new constitution is ratified by the people so that it joins Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Colombia in Latin America in recognition of gay marriage. Homosexuality was an issue in the early days of the Cuban Revolution and the country has made great strides in the area of LGBTQ rights compared with seven other Caribbean island nations where homosexuality is a criminal offence. If approved, Cuba's evolving social project is set to become even more revolutionary.

Source: *Cuba Solidarity Campaign*



*Mariela Castro marching for a homophobia free work environment. Photo: Bill Hackwell*

Latin America to approve gay marriage after the National Assembly recently approved a new constitution that defines marriage as "the consensual union of two people, regardless of gender." This replaces the current constitution's definition of marriage as the "voluntary union between a man and woman." The new constitution will be put to a referendum later this year.

Needless to say, the churches are opposed to any such change to the traditional understanding of marriage and five Protestant denominations have openly criticized the move. The Roman Catholic Church's position is that homosexual inclinations are "inherently disordered" although gay people should be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Yet Pope Francis is on record as saying that he is in no position to judge and that gay people should realize that God loves them and made them like that so they should love themselves. The Anglican Communion is divided on gay issues and same-sex marriage in particular with some branches actively providing gender-neutral

## BOLIVIA: Evo To Rubio: US is The Real Global Threat, Not Venezuela



*President of Bolivia, Evo Morales*

Bolivian President Evo Morales said Friday, on Twitter, that "the U.S. is the real threat to humankind," responding to Senator Marco Rubio's talk of using the U.S. Armed Forces against the Venezuelan Government as it "has become a threat for the region and even for the United States."

Morales said "Senator Marco Rubio warns of using the Empire's army

against the people of Venezuela because he assumes a 'threat' against the security of the U.S." The Bolivian president remarked that the U.S. is the real threat to the world's people, citing "its history of interventionism and military *coups d'état* in the world."

The Florida Republican senator made the comments after meeting with National Security Advisor for the Donald Trump Administration, John Bolton, at the White House Wednesday.

"I believe that the United States Armed Forces are only to be used in cases of a threat to national security. I think there is an argument, very strong, that can be used at this moment that Venezuela has become a threat to the region and even to the United States."

Earlier this year, in February, Rubio made a similar statement, encouraging the Venezuelan Army to overthrow the Nicolas Maduro-led Bolivarian government.

"The world would support the Armed Forces in Venezuela if they decide to protect the people and restore democracy by removing a dictator," Rubio said, in a tweet, on February 9.

At that time Evo Morales also responded forcefully stating that Latin America "is no longer the United States's backyard," while denouncing the United States's attempt to convince its South American allies to help orchestrate a military intervention or coup in Venezuela.

Source: *teleSur*, September 1, 2018

## BRAZIL: Supreme Electoral Tribunal Denies Lula's Candidacy for President

The electoral authority has rejected the nomination of the former Brazilian president Lula da Silva, who has been imprisoned since April of this year. With four votes to one, the Brazilian Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) vetoed his candidacy for the upcoming presidential elections.

Minister Admar Gonzaga's vote was decisive in determining the majority of the TSE, which decided to prevent Lula from standing in the elections. He was joined in that vote by Jorge Mussi, Og Fernandez and Luis Roberto Barroso.

This week, the electoral authority released the list of candidates who will be able to compete in the presidential race. The great and obvious absence is Lula, who according to the most recent polls is the overwhelming favorite to win the election, with over 54 million eligible voters indicating their support for him.

The former president has been detained in Curitiba since August 7 after being sentenced a second time to 12



*Demonstrations showing support for Lula, Photo: Ricardo Stuckert*

years and a month in prison for corruption and money laundering for the alleged acquisition of an apartment in Guarujá, although the courts could never prove that the property belonged to Lula.

Brazil's electoral laws prevent candidates from running for public office if they have a second conviction. Faced with this fact, the Electoral Attorney General's Office (FGE) chal-

lenged the nomination and the case was passed into the hands of TSE Minister Luis Roberto Barroso.

The Workers' Party (PT) continues to maintain that Lula is their candidate for president. Last Wednesday, the former minister and former mayor of Sao Paulo, Fernando Haddad, reiterated that he would continue as the former president's running mate for the October 7 elections.

Also in the mix is a statement by the United Nations (UN), which urges the electoral authority to offer the necessary guarantees so that Lula can exercise his political rights until his resources are exhausted "in fair legal proceedings." Michel Temer's government has claimed that this decision was not binding.

The lawyers for the PT are already reacting to the decision of the TSE and are considering taking their fight to the Federal Supreme Court (STF).

Source: *RT*, September 1, 2018

# L A T I N A M E R I C A

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We repudiate the tour to South America by the head of the Pentagon, James Mattis, who came to ensure the growing U.S. control over our natural resources, the subordination of our national states and the strategic plan to overthrow the president of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, by force.

The peoples of our Americas, who have suffered more than 500 years of domination, will not abandon the emancipatory route that we build day by day. On the contrary, we will defend our popular leaders with whom we will continue to build the path of the Great Homeland.

*End the persecution of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Rafael Correa!*

*Stop the general offensive against the government and people of Venezuela!  
Free Lula!*

Initial Endorsers: Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia; Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of Venezuela; Dilma Rousseff, former president of the Federative Republic of Brazil; Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Argentina, Pablo González Casanova, ex Dean UNAM and UNESCO International José Martí Prize, México; Roberto Fernández Retamar, president Casa de las Américas, Cuba; Miguel Barnet, President of the Union of Writers and Artists Cuba; Jorge Arreaza, Minister of Popular Power for Foreign Relations of Venezuela, Ernesto Villegas, Minister of Popular Power for Culture of Venezuela; Danny Glover, United States; Estela Bravo, United States; Irene León, Ec-

uador; Bill Fletcher Jr., United States; Silvio Rodríguez, Cuba; H. Bruce Franklin, United States; Rafael Cancel Miranda, Puerto Rico; Frei Betto, Brazil; Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Cuba; Fernando González Llort, T.M. Scruggs, United States; Hildebrando Pérez Grande, Perú; Dan Kovalik, United States; José Pertierra, United States; Jane Franklin, United States, and many TFA's board members.

*Secretariat of the Network in Defense of Humanity:* Omar González, Cuba; Pablo Sepulveda, Chile/Venezuela; Atilio Boron, Argentina; Carmen Bohórquez, Venezuela; Hugo Moldiz, Bolivia; Katu Arkonada, Basque Country; Angel Guerra, Cuba/México; Luciano Vasapollo, Italy; Marilia Guimaraes, Brazil; Nayar López, México; Chandra Muzaffar, Malaysia; David Comissiong, Barbados; Alicia Jrapko, United States; Paula Klachko, Argentina; Roger Landa, Venezuela; Ariana López, Cuba

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