

ROCLA UPDATE ON THE AMERICAS

A PUBLICATION OF THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE ON LATIN AMERICA

ROCLA

The Rochester Committee on Latin America (ROCLA) for many years has sought to be a bridge between the Rochester community and the people of Latin America.

In addition to providing information, ROCLA is committed to working for systemic justice and supports numerous organizations that are on the front line of this endeavor. School of the Americas Watch, Rights Action and the Rochester Labor Film Festival are among the many groups that receive our assistance and encouragement.

Monthly meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church (DUPC) and provide an opportunity to learn more about what is going on in that part of the world.

Steering Committee

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Publishing Team

Editors: Gail and Peter Mott;
Designer: Jim Anderson

ROCLA PRESENTS
AN ASTONISHING
NEW FILM

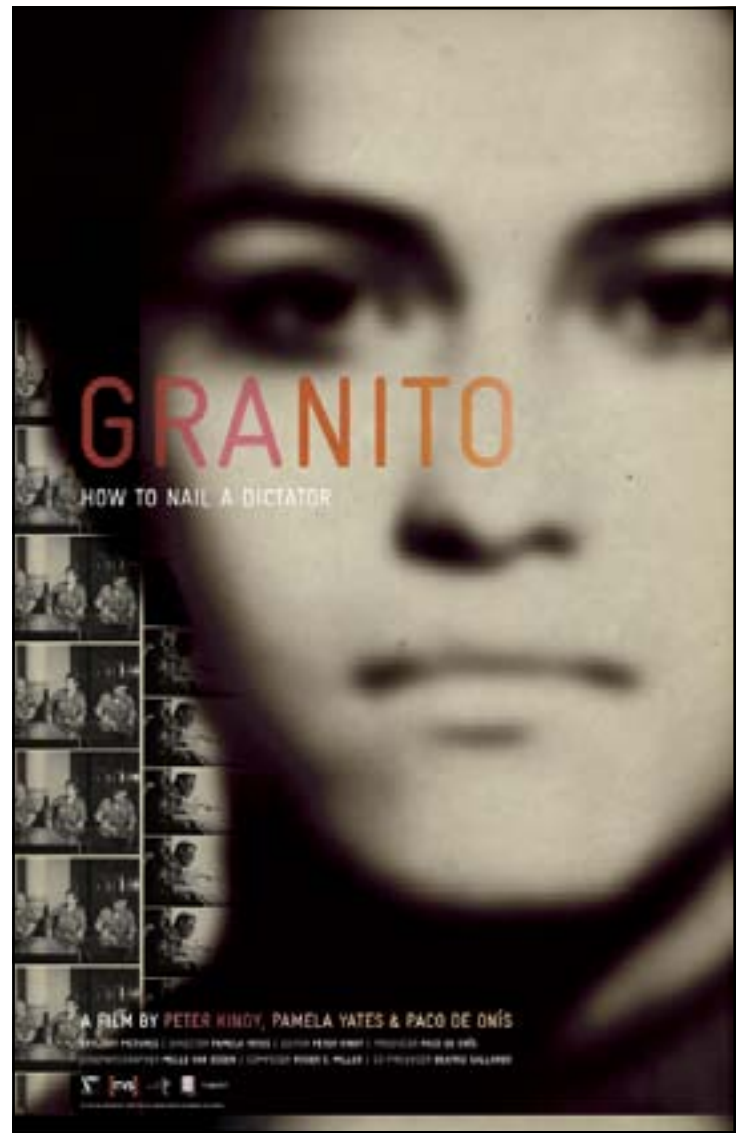
7PM WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5
DOWNTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
121 NORTH FITZHUGH STREET

GRANITO: HOW TO NAIL A DICTATOR

Sometimes a film makes history; it doesn't just document it. So it is with *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator*, the astonishing new film by Pamela Yates. Part political thriller, part memoir, Yates transports us back in time through a riveting, haunting tale of genocide and returns to the present with a cast of characters joined by destiny and the quest to bring a malevolent dictator to justice.

In 1982 Yates risked her life making the documentary *When the Mountains Tremble* in Guatemala, in order to bring the hidden story of the massacre of the Mayan people to the attention of the world. She filmed combat missions with both guerrillas and the army, and survived a troop transport helicopter crash to tell the tale. The film didn't stop the killings, but destiny gave Yates another chance. Her old film and its 16mm out-takes may be the only footage of the Guatemalan genocide, so lawyers building the case against former dictator General Ríos Montt recently asked Yates for her footage as evidence to help convict him.

Now, as if a watchful Maya god were weaving back together threads of a story unraveled by the passage of time, forgotten by most, our



characters become integral to the overarching narrative of wrongs done and justice sought that they have pieced together, each adding their granito, their tiny grain of sand, to the epic tale. ■

[DPC is wheelchair-accessible and looped for those with hearing loss.]



Peter Mott, Reuben from Brooklyn, Vic Vinkey, Ned Powell (faithful truck driver for years!)

ROCLA'S SUPPORT OF THE PASTORS FOR PEACE CUBA CARAVAN

by Bob Kaiser

A truck loaded with medical supplies for Cuba was cause for celebration among ROCLA members who gathered at Peter and Gail Mott's home in early July. The truck eventually met up with many other trucks from all over the country at the Mexican border and, after a two-day delay, made its way to Cuba, arriving on July 22. Along with these supplies, \$2000 of simple drugs were purchased for such illnesses as asthma and paid for by generous contributions from individuals and from the ROCLA budget.

Thanks to Kathy Goforth and Vic Vinkey who once again did a marvelous job as coordinators and to Helen Rice who made a very significant financial contribution. ■

OVER 15,000 FOREIGN PHYSICIANS GRADUATED IN CUBA IN SEVEN YEARS

HAVANA, Cuba, July 14 (acn) Thanks to the project of Havana's Latin American Medical School (ELAM), over 15,000 students from about 100 nations have become physicians since the first graduation of the center in 2005, as announced by officials of that institution.

Dr. Juan Carrizo, rector of the ELAM, stated that this shows what a nation that is poor in economic resources but rich in spirit and with the necessary political will can do to help other peoples. At present, over 19,000 students from more than 100 Latin American and Caribbean countries, as well as from the United States, Africa, Asia and Oceania are studying to become physicians by way of this scientific-pedagogical project. ■

REV. LUIS BARRIOS CO-DIRECTOR OF IFCO/ PASTORS FOR PEACE

by Grania Marcus

"You don't need a license to love." Thus began The Rev. Luis Barrios' wide-ranging and passionate discussion of the United States' numerous interventions in Latin America and the political context for his work with the Pastors for Peace. Father Luis led the 20th Anniversary Cuba Friendshipment that stopped at Gail and Peter Mott's house in Pittsford on July 8 to pack up medical and humanitarian supplies destined for Cuba for the 20th Anniversary .

Father Barrios, a Puerto Rican-born Episcopal priest at St. Mary's Church in Northern Manhattan and the Chair of the Department of Latin American Studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, lives a faith that is centered on love and the requirement to "do justice." For him, humanitarian aid and civil disobedience are inseparable, a stance that has resulted in his spending time in jail more than once. The story of nearly 200 years of US interventions in Latin America that violently overthrew democratically-elected governments and killed or exiled their leaders, including Salvador Allende in Chile, Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti, and Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, has led Father Luis to oppose the School of the Americas where for decades the US has trained right-wing military and junta dictators and torturers, perpetrators of acts that have caused the deaths and disappearances of hundreds of thousands of Latin American citizens.

Yet, while sharing his passionate dedication to physically standing with those who suffer, Father Luis's face was



Rev. Luis Barrios
Photo by AH Matlin

often suffused with a smile as he told humorous stories about his work with Pastors for Peace. When confronted on one trip by US customs officials trying to prevent the Cuba Friendshipment's supplies from leaving the US, and ordered to abandon them, Father Luis stated that his clothing was also Cuban and that he and the others would have to remove it. Faced with the prospect of a bunch of naked people walking through the customs building, and somewhat flummoxed, the officers let the participants keep their clothing and let their humanitarian shipment go. Yet, Father Luis's purpose is serious: to end the US blockade of Cuba, and the myriad ways the US is a force for evil in the world. He stresses that, "Another world is possible," and that religious people and non-religious people, who have come together for twenty years to make the Cuban Friendshipment possible, can and are working together to end the killing that US foreign policy has caused for too long, and are doing it with love. ■



AFTER I PICK THE FRUIT

“PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN ON MIGRANT WOMEN’S LIVES”

For 10 years, independent filmmaker Nancy Ghertner followed the lives of five migrant women who labored in Wayne County fields and orchards and their struggle “to fulfill their roles as workers, wives and mothers behind a curtain of community isolation that rendered them nearly invisible to all around them.” *After I Pick the Fruit*, a 93-minute documentary, is the stunning result of her labor over 10 years as she followed the women in New York, Florida and Mexico. Four of the women are from Mexico, and one is from Haiti. Since three of the women came to this

country without documentation, they appear in the film under pseudonyms. One review states that it “illuminates a community that is nearly invisible to most Americans, and will change the way you look at our national ‘immigration problem.’”

A former faculty member of the Rochester Institute of Technology School of Film and Animation, Nancy became curious about the lives of the migrant laborers she encountered back in the 1980s at local stores or businesses in Sodus, or at local festivals. “They’d come to these couple of events, and then recede into the farms,”



she says. “They were invisible to me as people.”

After I Pick the Fruit will donate the proceeds from DVD sales and speaker awards to support women and their families through projects at FLSNY, WARE, and RMM.

The Worker Justice Center of New York, Inc. www.wjcnyc.org is the merger of Farmworker Legal Service of NY (FLSNY) and the Workers’ Rights Law Center (WRLC).

The Worker Justice Center of New York pursues justice for those denied human rights

with a focus on agricultural and other low wage workers, through legal representation, community empowerment and advocacy for institutional change.

Wayne Action for Racial Equality (WARE), dedicated to the ideal of racial equality in Wayne County, New York.

Rural and Migrant Ministry, an interfaith coalition that works for the creation of a just rural New York State by nurturing leadership among farmworkers and standing with the disenfranchised to change unjust system. ■

STOP RACIAL PROFILING!

Go to: www.aclu.org/immigrants-rights, click on Take Action, and sign the pledge:

“I reject racial profiling and will do everything in my power to stop anti-immigrant laws. I stand with millions of people who care about justice, freedom and upholding the Constitution. Any law that allows people to be targeted and detained simply because of how they look or sound is unacceptable, unconstitutional and un-American.”

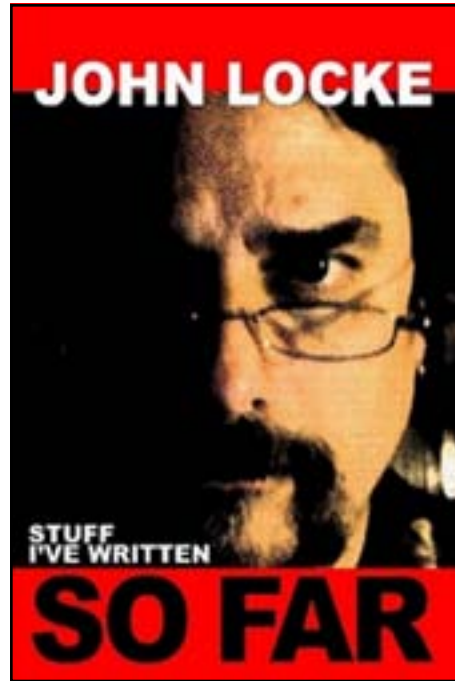
**STUFF I'VE WRITTEN
SO FAR, BY JOHN LOCKE***a review by George Dardess*

Who is John Locke?

Are we talking about John Locke, the great 17th Century English philosopher, whose writings greatly influenced our Founding Fathers and the writing of the US Constitution? Or do we mean the John Locke born in England about the same time as the philosopher who came to these shores as a Puritan refugee and promptly ran afoul of his Puritan confreres when he insisted on "improving" the parcel of land upon which he had squatted (though eventually the town fathers admitted that those "improvements" established a claim)? Or (skipping some centuries) do we mean the John Locke of today, the ROCLA member, former emcee of the Rice and Beans Dinner, and the author of the book under review, *Stuff I've Written So Far*, a collection of his essays for an Empire State College MA program in Arts and Liberal Studies and for his current classes at the Union Institute and the University of Cincinnati, along with selections from his recent blogposts?

Not an easy question to answer, as it turns out. For while the actual author is today's John Locke, the book is in fact a dialogue with the writer's namesakes: with the philosopher John Locke over the meaning in today's context of an Edenic "state of nature" such as the Philosopher once proposed and of the notion that Eden's acres can be safely parceled out to those whose possession of them will surely benefit those who stand outside Eden looking in (an early version of the "trickle down theory"); and with the Puritan John Locke (the writer's actual flesh-and-blood ancestor) whose "squatting" and "improving" of America's Edenic soil put the Philosopher's trickle down theory to the test.

What results from this ménage-a-trois is a challenge to the Philosopher's optimism about human nature and the Puritan's insistence on getting there first and taking it all for himself. Nature, in today's John Locke's view, may not be the scene of a nightmarish Hobbesian blood bath, where homo lupus homini (man is a wolf to man), but it is not Eden either. Human rights cannot be sustained without vigilance and defense. And those rights have to be both carefully distinguished from and at the



same time clearly linked to property rights. Social justice and economic justice are inextricably united. The philosopher would have agreed, of course. But the Philosopher, like the Founding Fathers, would now have to abide by the understanding that all people are included under the category of "human." No exceptions. No human being can be divided into a fraction (say three-fifths) and still remain human. The Puritan John Locke would have no more or less right to squat on Eden's soil than the former slave or the person of color currently trapped in our urban ghettos or the migrant hounded by ICE. And somehow, all must be able to squat. The commonwealth can take no other form than that it be squatted on in common.

All this is just to say that today's John Locke is a champion of social justice, a fact to which the formal essays collected in this volume attest. His blogposts pick up the theme in response to daily events. If there is a drawback to *The Stuff I've Written So Far*, it is the fact that both forms, the student essay and the blog, are written for the occasion, and in the case of the essays, under a teacher's guidance. Nothing wrong with that. But the sense one gets is that one is not yet hearing John's own voice, a voice that speaks to the present moment (as the blogposts do) but that also resonates (as the essays do) with a capacious understanding of where the specifics fit within the

larger story of humankind's struggle with its own selfishness. Combining both elements, personal passion with historical depth, in a way that brings the writer's own personality authoritatively to bear on issues of social justice, is a goal not quickly and easily reached. One thinks of Charles Bowden's development from a reporter on a Tucson newspaper to the dean of those writing today about the militarized mayhem of our current immigration policy, specifically as it affects the lives of the citizens of Ciudad Juárez and environs, but universally as it projects a ghastly prospect for the rest of us if we do not recapture a belief in the primacy of humanity over money and power.

Yet I think the author admits this drawback when gives his book its title: "stuff I've written so far." There's more stuff to come, he implies, and better. And given the ambitious, multifarious trajectory of his scholarly and activist career to date, we can expect the "more" to show development along the lines I've mentioned, towards invention of a voice that can truly engage on something like equal terms with the voice of his philosophical namesake.

But even saying this much about the John Locke of the future doesn't say enough. I said that the author's career trajectory is an "ambitious, multifarious one." What I meant was that "our" John Locke is much more than a blogger and a student. He is a man of broad experience and accomplishment in many domains: musician, medaled Navy veteran, father, expert in computer graphics, entrepreneur, documentary film artist (he did a two-hour documentary telling Cuba's side of the story), designer of computer based long-distance learning curricula... The variety tells us something of the formidable array of communicative skills and capacities at his disposal, in his journey towards maturity of voice. Like his ancestor, the Puritan, our John Locke has squatted on a disturbingly large swath of intellectual and creative ground. But also, again like that ancestor, he shows his judges that his "improvements" have given him some title.

And yet there is more in our John's favor here even than intellectual title: his audacious, flamboyant spirit. Again, the book title gives us the clue. "Stuff" indeed. His writings are tossed off casually, with a devil-may-care wave of the hand. Or is he pulling our leg? The photo of John on the book's jacket has him staring at us with an

(Continued on page 7)



PADRE ALEJANDRO RETURNS TO MEXICO

(FROM SR. PHYLLIS TIERNEY'S JUST US 198)

A *NY Times* article on July 14 reports that Padre Alejandro has returned to Mexico. After receiving six death threats in two months, he decided to take precautions. He left Mexico, traveled through North America and Europe, and then spent a few weeks resting in the Mexican city of Guadalajara. Padre Alejandro was here in Rochester to speak at St. John Fisher College in February. (see *ROCLA Update*, Spring 2012)

Padre Alejandro runs a shelter in Ciudad Ixtepec in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. His shelter is located near the train station where many migrants travel on top of freight trains going north. The shelter provides food and rest for weary travelers who are often victims of criminal activity.

He met with officials in Mexico City who promised increased security and assigned two body guards to the shelter to add to the four state escorts who have protected him since he filed a complaint against members of the Zetas drug gang in late 2010.

While we are gravely concerned about the mistreatment of migrants in the U.S., the sentiments in Mexico are far worse. Mass graves of migrant workers have been discovered. According to experts, as many as 22,000 migrants are kidnapped a year, based on testimony compiled by the National Human Rights Commission in Mexico. ■



Padre Alejandro Solalinde says people often ask him, "What can I do to help migrants?" Solalinde says, "It's often too easy for people to give from their pocketbooks and not from their hearts. I challenge people to get involved with a cause for human rights where they live. Migration is like a mighty river flowing south to north," Solalinde says. "The authorities can try to divert the current, but they'll

never stop the river. We're all responsible for the section of the 'riverbed' where we are. I'm doing my job in Ixtepec, and it's your job to take care of the 'riverbed' wherever you are."

LIBRADA PAZ TO RECEIVE 2012 ROBERT F. KENNEDY HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Librada Paz was only 15 years old when she crossed the border by foot into the Arizona desert with an older sister and managed to elude the Border Patrol. "It took us four days and four nights to cross that desert," Librada recalled. "No food, very little water. It's a nightmare I will never forget."

When most teenagers in upstate New York were going to school and leading "normal" lives Librada and her sister, who had joined two brothers, worked daily as farm workers in the fields and orchards.

The life she and her siblings endured is one that all too many young people from Mexico and their parents are forced to live today – if they survive the border crossing and ICE raids. Very little has changed for the better. But Librada has been working tirelessly for farmworker rights, and now she has extra support in her advocacy.

In being chosen to receive the prestigious 2012 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, Librada Paz will enter into a six-year partnership with the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights to further her advocacy for just working conditions for farmworkers and the recognition of additional exploitation women face in the fields daily.

In announcing the Award, the RFK Center for Justice and Human Rights said, in part:

"Ms. Paz is a Council Member for Rural and Migrant Ministry (RMM), a 31-year old organization that focuses on eradicating the systemic



violence and human rights violations that America's farmworkers and migrant laborers face each day. As a former farmworker, Ms. Paz experienced abuse first hand and is dedicated to ensuring that others do not have to suffer as she did. Through her advocacy, Ms. Paz frames farmworkers' and migrant laborers' rights as a human rights issue and gives a voice to a community silenced by fear and intimidation."

Librada will be honored at the Harvesting Justice Dinner on Tuesday, December 4, at Temple B'rith Kodesh. Details in the next newsletter. ■



Rural & Migrant Ministry logo

A CALL TO CONSCIENCE

a book review by Arnie Matlin

A Call to Conscience: The Anti-Contra War Campaign by Roger Peace is a book that needed to be written. The Nicaragua Solidarity movement of the 1980's was one of the most important social movements of the last half of the 20th Century. Surprisingly, no scholar had thoroughly documented this movement. Dr. Peace has written a solid, academically vigorous account of the way in which the solidarity movement opposed U.S. policy towards Nicaragua. Despite the prestige and power of President Reagan, and despite the enormous resources possessed by the U.S. government, solidarity activists managed to moderate the worst excesses of our government, and at least prevent an armed invasion of Nicaragua by the U.S. military. That is a story that needed to be told.

Professor Peace documents the Nicaragua Solidarity Movement carefully and comprehensively. The book is clearly and logically organized. It's filled with well-documented facts. (Very well-documented—the book contains 45 pages of notes and references to personal communications.)

The book's great strength is also—to an extent—its weakness. I consider it to be more of an academic tome than a people's history. Even though many of the events were of personal interest, I still found that the book worked best for me when I read it a few pages at a time. It wasn't the sort of book I could devour in a few sessions. (Not everyone had that reaction. Chuck Kaufman of the Nicaragua Network told me that he could hardly put the book down. He read it in two days.)

All of us in the Nicaragua Solidarity Movement owe a debt to Professor Peace. Although these events are still fresh in many minds, the facts and information will erode over time. Dr. Peace has done an amazing job of pulling together this information from an almost infinite number of publications and sources. The history of the Nicaraguan Solidarity Movement has been captured in a comprehensive and sophisticated fashion.

This is a book that I think will work best for scholars, academicians, and people who participated in "The Call to Conscience" in the 1980's. My hope would be that someone—possibly Professor Peace himself—will write a people's history of the same events. That book would appeal to undergraduates and people who are new to Nicaragua Solidarity, but are eager to learn its historical antecedents.

Finally, on a personal basis, I'll mention that I was interviewed and quoted in *A Call to Conscience*. Naturally, that makes it impossible for me to be totally objective in this review. Two modest criticisms—Professor Peace uses the phrase, "Anti-Contra War Campaign" throughout the book. It's true that all of us were against the Contra war, but I never heard anyone actually use that term. We always said, "Nicaragua Solidarity Movement." Also, my daughter Sally, who is mentioned in the book, was 15 when she went on the first Rochester-area delegation to Nicaragua. When she was 17, in 1990, she was a credentialed election observer, and served as Spanish-language interpreter for an election monitoring delegation. ■

FROM RANDALL SHEA'S MAY, 2012 NEWSLETTER:

TREE NURSERY PROJECT FOR OUR 8TH GRADE STUDENTS:

Greetings from Guatemala! As part of our experiential or hands-on learning, our eighth grade students are managing a tree nursery. The nursery currently has about 5,000 mahogany, cedar and marillo tree seedlings., through the support of The Guillermo Toriello Foundation and the Federation of Cooperatives...As Hugo Quinilla, our middle school principal explains, "The tree nursery project came about because we live in an area where there is a lot of deforestation.

The objective is to teach the students how to produce trees and then plant them in areas of their family land where there is sparse vegetation and where there are no large trees. Last year, a part of the seedlings produced were sold to villagers, with the objective of the project being self-sustaining." My daughter Kristina is an 8th grader this year and has worked regularly in the nursery. She comments enthusiastically that "The experience I have had has been very good. When we go to the nursery, everyone works, everyone collaborates. Nobody sits still doing nothing. We have learned a lot about the seedlings, about reforestation, about how to make the mixture of soil and organic and other material that the seeds will be planted in... Now we have formed a small student coordinating group which helps to maintain order when the two eighth grade sections come together to work in the nursery, so that everyone is collaborating and doing something. Yes, it's been a very positive experience." ■

TWO NEW BOOKS

by Joseph Sorrentino

A quick note to let you know I've published two books using Kindle Direct Publishing. If you have a Kindle, you can purchase the books and they'll load directly to your machine. If you don't have a Kindle, well I guess we'll have to wait and see if these writings ever appear as good, old-fashioned books.

Here are brief descriptions: *A Few Tales From the Road* has six humorous (I hope) short

pieces and some observations from my trips to Mexico. For those of you who know me only as a social documentary photographer and writer concerned with social issues, this will show you another side of me. *The Other Mexico* is a collection of the articles I've published about Mexico. There are ten articles and nine of them are about the social issues I've covered in Mexico. The first piece, however, is from my very first trip in 1997 and is about *Day of the Dead*.



(So Far from page 5) intensity that would be unnerving if we didn't believe, from other clues, that the stare is to get our attention, not to intimidate, and to remind us that all voices, even those at the service of social justice, have to be taken with a grain of salt.

Gail Mott reports that John used to come to ROCLA Steering Committee meetings with a black beret on his head and a parrot on his shoulder. That image of the buccaneer combined with a dash of Che Guevara is just the one we need to get us over the hump of thinking that a passion for social justice has to be a grim slog through ever more discouraging news towards an impossible Utopian goal. No. Our sense of humor and imagination tell us otherwise, if we will listen to them and allow them to speak, as John does—and, I hope, will continue to do as he develops into a figure commanding our nation's attention to its debt to our own wounded humanity. ■

John's book is available at <http://tinyurl.com/John-Locke-SoFar>.

BASEBALL IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

by Brian Concannon, recipient of the 2012 International White Dove Award, on behalf of the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH)/Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI).

[Ed. note: Cholera: Another example of the failure of the UN "Peacekeeping" force (MINUSTAH) in Haiti. Readers already know about the brutal repression in 2006 by MINUSTAH against supporters of former President Aristide in Cité de Soleil.]

Baseball in the Time of Cholera is a powerful 29-minute documentary that tells the true story of 14 year-old Joseph Alvyns and the ways in which the cholera epidemic changed his young life forever. Baseball also prominently features BAI's managing attorney, Mario Joseph's tireless work to achieve justice for victims of cholera. This film will bring Haitians' fight for justice to the world stage.

Watch *Baseball in the Time of Cholera* at www.undeny.org then sign the petition/donate toward the legal fight for justice for cholera victims.

We encourage you to take this moment to join the movement by sharing the film with your family and friends on YouTube and Facebook, and by tweeting @UN. ■



ROCLA HAS ROCHESTER LABOR FILM SERIES TICKETS FOR YOU!

by Marilyn Anderson

As one of the collaborating sponsors of the series, ROCLA receives tickets that we are happy to distribute free to our members (Regular admission is by GEH pass or tickets purchased at the box office).

The 2012 Labor Film Series includes eight films, screened Fridays at 8pm throughout September and October, at the Dryden Theatre, George Eastman House, 900 East Avenue. (For program information see

the 2012 Labor Film Schedule, downloadable from www.rochesterlabor.org.)

Tickets and series flyers will be available at ROCLA monthly meetings in September and October and will also be obtainable from Marilyn Anderson in the lobby of the Dryden Theater before each screening.

This year's Latin America-themed film is a stunningly touching work from Argentina: *Los Labios* ■



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 8 PM

THE LIPS

(LOS LABIOS)

Rochester Premiere, (Ivan Fund and Santiago Loza, Argentina 2010, 100 min., Spanish with subtitles)

Blurring the line between documentary and fiction, *The Lips* tells the story of three women health promoters as they provide services to impoverished rural communities in Argentina. Filmed with great candor, the story of these women unfolds as they contend with isolation, dilapidated shelter and inadequate medical supplies while addressing the health problems of their patients. ■

Jim Bearden is ROCLA's volunteer webmaster extraordinaire. Visit the site and you'll agree: www.rocla.us

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ECUADOR OUT

OF SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS!

The president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, his Minister of Defense and other high-ranking Ecuadoran officials met with members of the SOA Watch Delegation at the Presidential Palace in Quito, Ecuador, ON June 27, 2012. President Correa started the meeting by announcing that Ecuador will no longer send its soldiers to the School of the Americas (SOA/ WHINSEC). This is a tremendous victory for the human rights community across the Americas.