

Picantico



Volume 3, Issue 2
May 2007

Picantico is a short newsletter (a mini-*Picante*) that ...

- *Keeps you up-to-date on PICA's programs and activities*
- *Inspires social action for global economic justice.*

- PICANTICO -
JUST THE
RIGHT SPICE!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

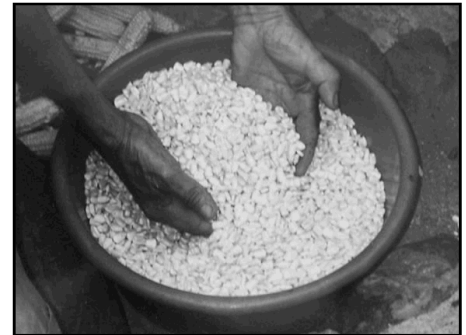
<i>Fair and Local Food Campaign, by Jon Falk</i>	1
<i>Mining Companies: One Down, One to Go, by Dennis Chinoy</i>	1
<i>The best way to give to PICA</i>	2
<i>MOFGA Delegation Visits Chalatenango, by Kim Michel</i>	3
<i>New at PICA - La Tienda de Carasque!</i>	3
<i>PICA Dinner June 2 - Celebrate 16 Sweet Years of Sistering</i>	3
<i>Youth Adelantando News, by Emily Lad</i>	4

PICA LAUNCHES "FAIR AND LOCAL FOOD" CAMPAIGN

By Jon Falk

In Bangor's Sister City of Carasque, El Salvador, it now costs Carasqueños more to grow corn than they can buy it for in the market. The influx of heavily subsidized, cheap U.S. corn, abetted by free trade policies, has made it impossible for this rural farming community to survive economically. Young people have had to leave the community for work. Many have made the long, dangerous journey to the U.S., looking for a way to support themselves and their families back home.

A similar dynamic is playing out here in Maine, where small farmers are dealing with many of the same problems as their Central American counterparts. They, too, are threatened by competition from food produced by corporate mega-farms. Like Carasque, many eastern Maine communities are struggling to remain viable and retain their young people.



For 20 years, PICA has done local organizing that makes global connections. So to address this common set of problems, we are launching the "Fair and Local Food / Comida Justa y Local" campaign, to support agriculture which:

(Continued on page 2)

EL SALVADOR MINING COMPANIES: ONE DOWN, ONE TO GO

By Dennis Chinoy

PICA and U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities (USESSC) continue to work with Carasque and surrounding communities to prevent a potentially devastating open-pit gold mining project in Chalatenango. In recent months, our combined efforts have taken some big steps forward:

- Through the efforts of USESSC and the SHARE Foundation, Rep. Michael Michaud agreed to sponsor a letter to the Salvadoran legislature which 26 Congressional Representatives signed. The letter pointed out that open-pit gold mining is incompatible with the goals of U.S. development aid, and urged the Salvadoran legislature to support a bill banning metallic mining in the country. This letter has been greeted with appreciation by the Salvadoran anti-mining resistance, and has received national press attention in El Salvador – not to mention being read in its entirety at Carasque's most recent community meeting.
- Aura Silver Resources (formerly Au Martinique Silver) recently sold its interests in the proposed mining project in Chalatenango to Tribune Resources, a newly formed Canadian mining company. We interpret this sale as tacit acknowledgment that Aura's designs on Salvadoran mineral deposits could not be successful due to resistance to the project.
- U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities and a coalition of U.S. and Canadian environmental and human rights groups have written a joint letter to Tribune Resources informing them of the history and continued resistance to mining activity in the region, advising

(Continued on page 2)

What's the Best Way to Give to PICA?

PICA depends more and more on individual donations to fund our work. It's hard for most of our members to give a lot of money at once. But many can afford to give a little bit each month. If instead of giving \$50 or \$60 all at once you gave \$10, \$15, or \$20 a month, you could double or even triple your support! You can arrange to have monthly donations charged to your debit or credit card through a secure server on our website - www.pica.ws - just go to the top of the page and click on "Donate Now."

Monthly support provides us with a steady and reliable source of income, giving us more flexibility to respond to emergencies and seize on organizing opportunities.

Of course monthly giving doesn't work for everyone, and one time gifts of every size are greatly appreciated.

Because we do some lobbying work, gifts made directly to PICA are not tax deductible. However, gifts received online are tax deductible, because they are processed by Groundspring, one of our fiscal sponsors, and are used solely for our educational work. If you wish to make a tax deductible gift by check to support our educational work, you may make a check out to our other fiscal sponsor, the Maine Foreign Affairs Education Fund.

Fair and Local Food (continued from page 1)

1. provides a safe and adequate living for farmers and agricultural workers
2. is ecologically sustainable
3. maximizes economic, community and environmental benefits where it is practiced

Good organizing comes from building lasting connections, and listening to the hopes, fears, visions, and needs of a community. The foundation of the Fair and Local Food campaign is a "Listening Project," a series of in-depth interviews of farmers, agricultural workers, and the people who work with them, in both Maine and in El Salvador. The Listening Project model (www.listeningproject.info) has proven to be powerful organizing tool for nonviolent social change in places as diverse as rural North Carolina and Croatia.

Our goals are to bring out the voices of people who aren't usually heard, and to make connections among groups of people who do not usually have the opportunity to connect with each other. We believe the coalition that this work produces will make a real contribution to our shared work, both here and in Central America for human rights and sustainable communities.

We will be holding a training for interviewers in the late summer or early fall. Would you be interested in helping us arrange and conduct interviews? Do you know someone we should talk with? **Call or E-mail PICA to get involved with this exciting new campaign!**

Mining (continued from page 1)

them that their investment will be no more successful than Aura's, and inviting further dialogue.

Meanwhile, in late April, Carasque and other communities in Chalatenango lent their support to a massive demonstration against gold mining by the Pacific Rim corporation in the neighboring department of Cabañas. According to one report, demonstrators "peacefully dismantled company no-trespassing signs and fences around the property, as well as one small building on the potential mining site."

You can help: The El Salvador anti-mining work group is now trying to organize a "mail-storm" of organizational and personal letters to Tribune Resources. This rapid response will let them know that there is deep and wide opposition to their mining plans, just weeks following their acquisition of mining rights to the hills of Chalatenango.

Please write a brief letter ASAP, expressing your opposition to their plans for mining exploration despite the refusal of the affected communities to grant permission to explore their lands. These populations sacrificed many lives to reclaim their communities during the Salvadoran war, and will not back down in their resistance to mining which threatens to ruin their fields, contaminate their water supply, and dig up the land they call home.

This letter needn't be long, eloquent or detailed, although we'd be happy to send you an email with more information and "talking points"

We can win, and you can help. Address your letter to: Graham Harris, CEO, Tribune Resources Corp, 1177 West Hasting St. Suite 2007, Vancouver, B.C., V6E 2k3, Canada. And, so we can track how many letters get sent, please mail a copy (though you needn't "cc" USESSC on Tribune's letter) to U.S. - El Salvador Sister Cities PO Box 2543, Plattsburg, NY 12901. Many thanks from the Anti-Mining Group and mil gracias from your brothers and sisters in El Salvador.

FMI, call or E-mail Dennis Chinoy at 207-945-5827, jesaskade@gwi.net

MOFGA DELEGATION VISITS CHALATENANGO

by Kim Michel



Members of the MOFGA / El Salvador Sistering Committee recently returned from their January 20-30 delegation to El Salvador. We work with small farmers and Salvadoran organizations supporting small farmers in the department of Chalatenango, El Salvador. This year's nine-person delegation consisted of seven committee members, Heather Spalding of MOFGA, and Amy Brown of WERU community radio.

While in Chalatenango, we met with numerous farmers, cooperatives, and community members to discuss issues ranging from agriculture to the mining threats facing the region. The sistering committee's ongoing work with fair trade issues led to many productive discussions with coffee farmers, a coffee processing cooperative, and a women's crochet cooperative, and also included a tour of a fruit-drying cooperative in the region. Visits to parcelas of land included seeing (and sampling!) a variety of crops, including pineapples, oranges, bananas, and shade-grown coffee. The committee also had a great visit and interview with staff at Radio Sumpul, Chalatenango's community radio and the sister station to Maine's own WERU radio.

The delegation was very successful in that it allowed for the exchange of experiences, histories, and current events between communities and continued to build upon the existing relationships we have with our Salvadoran brothers and sisters. Upcoming events and projects of the committee in Maine will be charged with inspiration from these exchanges. To learn more about the delegation, listen for related radio shows on WERU, or check the archives online at <http://shows.weru.org/archives/>.

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SOMETHING NEW AT PICA – LA TIENDA DE CARASQUE!

by the Sister City Marketing Committee

Look for something new at PICA – La Tienda de Carasque! The Sister City Marketing Committee is excited to announce the opening of our new self-service store at the PICA office. Now unique handmade items from Carasque, El Salvador are available for sale during PICA hours, or anytime the door is open.

The Marketing Committee has been very successful, sending thousands of dollars back to the Carasque sewing and crochet co-ops. But we are hoping that with an available permanent location we will be able to increase sales. Consider...It is Aunt Mary's birthday – wouldn't she love a beautiful hand-embroidered table scarf? Maybe a crocheted handbag? Next time you go out, visit the PICA office. Our store is always open.

Here's how it works: PICA believes in the honor system. All the merchandise is in clear plastic bags in stacked bins. Take the bags out to view several items at once. When you make your selection, remove the item from the bag – the price will be clearly marked. There is a clipboard with simple receipts to fill out (it is important to itemize so that we can pay the proper co-op). Please don't forget to add 5% sales tax – a chart is posted for your convenience. We accept personal checks and cash; just slide a receipt with your payment into the clearly marked slot of the cash box.

So...next time you come in to the PICA office – or next time you are out and about – stop in and take a look. Thanks for your support – together we are making a difference in the world.

– Kathleen Caldwell, Deb Morrill, Karen Volckhausen, Francine Wickes

PICA Dinner June 2 Celebrate 16 Sweet Years of Sistering

When: Saturday, June 2,
6:00 - 8:30 PM

Where: Unitarian Universalist Church, 120 Park St., Bangor

Suggested Donation (or what you can afford):

Adults \$10

Children \$5

Children under 5 free

Family \$25

Join with the PICA community in celebrating 16 years of PICA's Sister City relationship with Carasque, El Salvador. We promise an evening of fun, good stories, good company, and great food. Our dinner program will share the inspiration we have taken from our 16-year relationship with the remarkable community of Carasque, El Salvador. Our Carasqueño brothers and sisters are also very excited about this occasion, and are planning their own celebration to coincide with ours!

This will be a popular event - Please reserve seats by sending a check to PICA in advance – make checks payable to PICA.

Whether or not you can attend, you can share in the celebration by buying an ad in the dinner's program book. For more information contact PICA.

**Peace through Interamerican
Community Action (PICA)/
ROSC**

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COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

(meetings 6:00pm at PICA,
except as noted)

- **Sister City Committee**
- Second Wednesday of
each month, 5:45 -
8:00pm (call PICA for
location)
- **Sister City Marketing
Committee** - Fourth
Tuesday of each month
- **Fair and Local Food
Committee** (call PICA
for time and location)
- **Board** - Third Wednes-
day of each month.
- **Development** - Fourth
Wednesday of each
month
- **Youth Adelantando** -
Every Monday, 6:00 -
7:30pm (summer hours)

YOUTH ADELANTANDO NEWS

by Emily Lad

This spring we've been working on several presentations, as one of our primary goals is to educate other youths on issues that affect us all. Two members recently travelled to Dixfield presented a workshop entitled "Youth Activism: Making Change in the World" at Dirigo High School's Diversity Day. The workshop was a discussion of current issues and ways in which youth can organize themselves, educate others, and inspire enthusiasm for activism. Two other YAistas delivered a slideshow at John Bapst Memorial High School's "Day of Mutual Respect," focusing on human rights in relation to El Salvador's civil war and the current struggles there. Youth Adelantando is scheduled to make yet another presentation, "Organizing for Change," concerning the importance of organization and the present progress in El Salvador, at James F. Doughy Middle School in Bangor.

In addition to our work on El Salvador and youth activism, YA has been refining a slideshow on conscientious consumerism, aimed at high school and college students. It provides an overview of sweatshop conditions, globalization, and alternatives to buying from companies that employ sweatshop labor. We have already presented this to the John Bapst Student Environmental Action Committee and at the Day One Natural Workers Conference in Scarborough and at Unity College's Earth Day celebration.

YA has started a one-page newsletter, with each issue focusing on a specific current issue. Plus, six YAistas traveled to New York City for the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in February, where they attended workshops concerning worldwide women's issues of inequality, subordination, and abuse, learned about the political process of the UN, and made friends with some truly wonderful people (coming from over 50 countries)!

For more information about Youth Adelantando, or to arrange for a presentation at your school or organization, contact PICA Youth Organizer Hazel Stark (ya@pica.ws).

