



# *Intercambio*

Education Research Bulletin of the IDEA Network

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## **EROSION OF THE RIGHTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE,**

**criminalization of social protest in Latin America**

Foto: David Bacon

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*Intercambio*

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## INTRODUCTION

The seriousness of the dispossession of the social and political rights of the world's peoples that accompanies neoliberal capitalism's deepening economic crisis, requires an analysis of current trends. It is important to examine the experiences of resistance and construction of alternatives by social movements in the face of an alarming ascent of authoritarian regimes of a neo-fascist nature, such as that led by Donald Trump in the United States. As we will see throughout the pages of this issue of *Intercambio*, one of the sectors that in the last decade has especially suffered the criminalization of its struggles and the imposition of politics of exclusion and discrimination is youth. Those that find themselves in the education sector – students – but also young teachers, workers – employed and unemployed – Afro-Americans, Indigenous, migrants.

The persecutions, disappearances, imprisonment, threats, exile, and assassinations are not the acts of past military dictatorships. Even today students, teachers and other social sectors face risks for the simple act of demanding their rights, an extended reality in the current situation in the Americas.

This issue of *Intercambio* focuses on the erosion of the rights of youth and the criminalization of social protest in the Americas.

The reader will find a regional overview of the erosion and violation of the rights of youth.

We begin with a report from the Latin American and Caribbean Students Organization (OCLAE) on the current education situation in Latin America, where a privatizing trend is a common denominator in most countries. The economic, political and social crisis in these countries exposes government's unwillingness to guarantee fundamental social

rights, such as education. The student movement, and OCLAE in particular, play a strategic role in resistance to neoliberal measures and in the generation of alternative proposals.

The working conditions of undocumented Mexican youth in the United States cannot be ignored in moments when they are criminalized in a brutal manner, persecuted, deported and denied the basic right to live in the country where they have grown up. Their presence has been fundamental in the large mobilizations that have been carried out in the main cities in the United States against the policies of Donald Trump, and international support for their struggle is growing.

In Mexico, the situation of vulnerability that youth find themselves in today is shown through a re-telling of their social and educational exclusion, discussing the institutional violence they face, the criminalization of their struggles, as well as the processes of solidarity with teachers and social organizations. These point to the need for international action to confront the offensive and to construct alternatives.

In Central America, Indira Aguirre and Leonardo Lenin, in presenting the human rights crisis in Honduras in the area of human rights, demonstrate the erosion of rights of students and teachers over the past ten years.

In South America, this issue illustrates two experiences of the serious situation of criminalization of social struggle. The case of Colombia, even as the armed conflict begins to end, representatives of social movements are still characterized as internal enemies. That is why today they tell us, "may gambling on peace not cost us our lives!"

The article, "The criminalization of social struggle



in Ecuador”, shows the numerous cases of human rights violations and the criminalization of social protest in this country, during the recent government of President Rafael Correa. The article also outlines the offensive against the most organized sectors of Ecuadorian society: teachers, students, and indigenous communities.

In a second central theme we focus on four experiences of resistance, and alliances between student movements, teacher organizations and other sectors of society to confront the criminalization of social protest and to build alternatives.

In the Argentine case we focus on the organized work of youth within the Confederation of Argentine Workers and their connection to other social sectors in four of the country’s regions. We present the response that collectives of organized youth in union structures have given, carrying out different forms of protest, struggle and organization.

In Brazil, after thirteen years of progressive governments, the people confront a setback in terms of social and human rights. In this situation, youth have been one of the most affected sectors.

The lessons of the student movement in an agricultural University in Honduras are presented through interviews. They illustrate the importance of the student strike as a legitimate tool against the constant violations to the human rights of the student body and teaching personnel by university officials and the Honduran repressive state.

The contribution from the Pedagogical collective "Totlahtol Yoltok" (Our Living Word) from the Altas Montañas indigenous region of Veracruz, Mexico, shows us that if youth are one of the sectors of society most impacted by neoliberal policies and institutional violence, youth from indigenous communities are even more vulnerable due to the historic discrimination they suffer. At the same

time, they organize and participate, together with the Mexican teachers’ movement and re-inforce ties with their communities.

Finally, we include material that underscores the importance of organizing international labour in defense of the democratic rights and liberties of our peoples. The article “Campaign for sanctuary schools in Canada” is a demonstration of the social alliances and international solidarity generated in the face of attacks by US President Trump against undocumented migrants in the United States.

The political declaration of the Trinational Student Gathering (Mexico, United States, Canada) by the Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education closes this issue, highlighting the international urgency to resist, and to build alternatives to the deep economic, political and social crisis that we are living through.

*Being an internationalist is settling our own debt with humanity. Whoever is not capable of struggling for others, will not be sufficiently capable of struggling for one’s self.*

*Fidel Castro (In Memoriam)*

# Current context of education in Latin America<sup>1</sup>

**Heidy Villuendas Ortega**



In the past meeting of the General Secretariat of the Continental Latin American and Caribbean Student Organization (OCLAE), held August 2016, in Havana, Cuba, we conducted an analysis of the region's current context, in particular as it relates to education.

Here, we present a summary.

The hemisphere's student organizations have always advocated for the teaching system to become an essential tool for the construction of a prosperous, just society that acts in solidarity and within a model of holistic development of the human being.

During the first 15 years of the current century, the political scenario of advances in Latin American integration, with the ascension to the presidency of progressive governments, made it possible to implement measures of a social character that benefitted the poorest sectors of our Americas.

We have seen an increase in investment in education in many of our continent's countries; which allowed for an increase school admissions, access was democratized, programs for student well-being, research, continuing education, etc. have been created. As well, there are advances in the process of integration with alternatives such as the Latin American Space for Higher Education (ENLACES).

However, these measures were not enough to end the profound inequalities inherent to the prevailing capitalist system. Our continent continues to be the most unequal in the world and the commercialization of education continues to advance in gigantic steps. In fact, our hemisphere is where the largest education monopoly is located.

Today in Latin America and the Caribbean, we are living in a unique moment, marked by a strong conservative offensive from the right abetted by imperialism. The cases of Brazil and Argentina are a clear example of the setbacks that we are facing, above all in the neoliberal policies that directly affect education.

The recent approval of Law PEC 241 or the attempt to apply the Law Schools with Party in Brazil de-

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<sup>1</sup> Report presented by Heidy Villuendas, OCLAE President in the 18th Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the IDEA Network, held on November 14 and 15 2016, in Mexico City.



monstrate that in many of the region's countries, education is still not seen as a human right, public good and fundamental duty of the State. We are concerned that private education, individualized anti-democratic learning is prioritized, governed by regulations and institutions directed according to the logic of the market, in which the teacher's, student's and community's roles as a whole are negated. Education models oriented to create cheap manual labour, decrease education budgets, and the exclusion of the most vulnerable sectors from university learning, are some of the difficulties that today we face as movements in defense of education in all of the continent and the whole world.

In the same manner, we are opposed to the application of "Plan Bologna" as a goal of Latin American universities that are copying neoliberal higher education models in place in Europe, negating the Latin America's social reality.

The current context, increases the cases of violations of university autonomy and co-government. It is important to highlight the serious situation of criminalization of social movements and the political persecution that student leaders and organizations in some countries.

Privatizing tendencies are a common denominator in many countries in the Americas. The economic, political and social crisis expose government's lack of interest in guaranteeing the basic social rights like education, which have historically been gained by the people's struggles. Because of this the student movement plays a strategic role in resistance against neoliberal measures and in forwarding alternative proposals.

OCLAE, in the context of celebrations for the organization's half century, ratifies its foundational principles; among them, education reform at the

continental level and the struggle against illiteracy - which causes so much harm in the poorest sectors and which governments do not want to eliminate because it keeps our peoples submissive. We also advance our demand for free education and the struggle against the commercialization of higher education, among others.

We will continue to promote the campaign, "Education is not a commodity: For an emancipatory, public, free and quality education, at the service of people." And to mark the centennial of the Cordoba Reform (which established the tradition of autonomy for Latin American universities), we launch the Latin American Education Caravan that will travel throughout the continent, debating with students from all over about the role of education in society, bringing together society's local and regional needs and realities as regards education.



# The migration of young Mexicans to the United States: undocumented students in Los Angeles, California.

Photo: Mixtec migrants, workers of agricultural farms. David Bacon

**Patricia Pozos Rivera\***

**Summary:** The article considers the working conditions of young undocumented Mexicans who have been admitted to California State University, Los Angeles. In addition to being students and workers, some of them have joined campus organizations that support undocumented students. Young people are a great productive and transformational force in our society, and that is why it is necessary to reflect on their reality.

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**Key words:** immigration, youth, labour force, undocumented students

## Introduction

It is clear that one of the social groups most widely affected by the 2007 crisis was youth. They had the highest unemployment rates between 2008 and 2009, according to the World Labor Organization (WLO). Furthermore, young people who do manage to enter the labour market are more susceptible to working longer hours, in informal or unsafe jobs, with the lowest wages and benefits. They are also the most robust workers who can endure extended shifts, cope more easily with mild diseases without missing work or going to a doctor and adapt to different activities. For all of these reasons, they are seen as attractive workers for multitasking and flexibility. The combination of their being both flexible labour on the one hand and highly productive on the other makes them a very attractive match for the labour markets of developed economies.

In 2014, I carried out field work in which I interviewed young undocumented Mexicans who were studying at California State University, Los Angeles. Since they were also workers, I learned about their working conditions as well about their organizational and mutual aid strategies. It must be highlighted that the situation of the young people who make it into the education system is very different from those who do not, and that there are also big difference between working in the city or the in countryside. In this article, I focus on city youth, since they are the ones involved in formal education.

## Young Mexicans in Los Angeles, California.

Most of the young people working in the US are employed by the tertiary sector in highly flexibilized activities like food preparation, sales and services such as gardening, housecleaning, babysitting and caregiving. Students who work devote twenty hours a week to their labour activities, plus another twenty to a second job on the weekend, in addition to their regular school hours. Consequently, the higher their workload, the more they neglect self-care such as sleeping and eating well. Because of their age range (15-29), they ought to be sleeping between seven and nine hours a night, and never less than six. But on average, the people I interviewed only slept four hours a night. Another problem is that they often do not eat well either since lunch hours usually correspond to their travel time.

In terms of salaries, these young undocumented Mexicans earn the minimum wage and none of them have fringe benefits like medical care, paid vacation time, or Christmas bonuses. Furthermore, the work they do is highly risky since they lift heavy weights, work in warehouses or do other activities that can hurt their backs. They also work in kitchens, where they are surrounded by hazards such as stoves, ovens, sharp knives and wet floors.

Most of the people interviewed had been included in the DACA (*Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals*) program created by former president Barack Obama through a presidential decree. Under it, the state deferred its deportation priorities



so that undocumented youth who did not have legal residency in the US, but who met certain criteria, would not be immediately deported, but rather they would be given a work permit and a driver's license.

Young undocumented migrant students, along with the offspring of immigrants, started the fight in 2001 and began lobbying for the bill known as the *DREAM Act*. The acronym stands for *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors*, thus the name *dreamers*.

After many years of struggle and of having the Congress deny its passing, Barack Obama approved DACA through decree, which was one step towards the very much needed recognition of their rights. True, their deportation was deferred, and work permits and driving licenses were granted – very necessary for a city like LA, with such extensive urban development - but it did not pave the way to citizenship or to real recognition of their rights as workers. DACA was not a handout; it was the result of a long struggle.


## Conclusions

DACA, the program that is now at risk with the coming to power of Donald Trump, was achieved thanks to the young *dreamers* movement. They are, and will continue to be, a great transformational force.

Donald Trump has threatened not to renew the dreamers ability to stay in the US through DACA. However, I believe that the terror Mr. Trump

is stirring up is really meant to further control immigrant labour, to further cheapen it and to make it even more precarious. It is my opinion that the DACA youth are qualified labour and very necessary for the US labour market. In order to control this labour force and prevent it from achieving its rights, they are being intimidated with the very real danger of deportation. That is why it is urgent to organize and show solidarity towards young migrants and to make sure they don't lose ground in the fight to be acknowledged as a necessary labour force that is deserving of labour rights.





# The erosion of social rights in Mexico and the student movement

Idea Network graphic file

**Rodolfo Bautista García,  
Eduardo Cárcamo González  
Verónica Yaneli Tenería Mendieta\***

## Summary

This article explores how the social rights of the Mexican youth are being eroded — specifically the right to education — due to the Mexican government's efforts to privatize public education. Furthermore, this article reveals the solidarity of students and youth with social movements, and proposes the need for an international agenda to support the fight of all social movements.

## Keywords

Student movement, youth rights, criminalization of young, right to education

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## ***Neoliberal policies against the young***

Mexico is embroiled in a deep political, social and humanitarian crisis, and young people are the ones who are suffering most in terms of their rights and standards of living. Youth are facing unemployment, labor exploitation, institutional violence, exclusion from education, and criminalization. In many cases they are forced to find a way out by migrating, or engaging in informal trade and crime.

Neoliberal reforms are stripping the population of social rights such as education, healthcare, social security, and decent jobs; and the new generations are the ones most severely affected. According to figures from 2013, there are 21.5 million young people in Mexico, of whom 9.2% are unemployed, in comparison to the 5% unemployment rate for the rest of the workforce. There are 3.3 million youth who are dedicated to housework<sup>1</sup>, since they are not employed, looking for a job, or enrolled at a school.

But young people are also facing violence due to poverty, marginalization, and the "war against drugs", a fact that is reflected by the country's mortality rate. There are three main causes of death amongst young males: violence (24.4%), car accidents (17.9%) and self-inflicted wounds (8.1%). Together, they represent 50.4% of all deaths among young men, while 9.7% of young women are dying due to violence inflicted on them. For both men and women, violence is one of the main causes of death among young people.

## ***Educational exclusion: an effect of privatization***

In the case of education as a social right, the outlook is no better. Even though a great number of young students have been historically denied access to the educational

<sup>1</sup> The chores include looking after children, siblings or ill family members, since the health system does not guarantee their care. This is another factor limiting access to employment or educational opportunities for many young people.

system, particularly at the upper-middle (senior high) and higher education (college) levels,<sup>2</sup> since the beginning of the current administration (December 2012), the perspective has been one of even greater exclusion. The Education Reform supported by the business class, is advancing privatization policies for the use of public resources to benefit private companies.

It is estimated that 48.9% of all teenagers have been denied access to a senior high level of education, even though they successfully ended their junior high studies (Unicef, 2016). The estimated dropout rate in 2014 was of 13.4%, but gets worse at higher levels due to problems such as desertion and a lack of coverage. Only 1 out of every 3 people receives a higher education.

In Mexico, there are different factors that contribute to educational exclusion, but two are paramount: precarious living standards and the lack of guaranteed access to students' right to education, one with which the Government is obliged to comply. By way of example we have the state of Oaxaca, one of the poorest in the country, where there are 539 municipalities without senior high school.

There are elements that make it difficult for the young to stay in school. Many times parents themselves force their children to get a job soon as possible, so they can contribute to the family income. Most upper-middle (senior high) and higher education (college) schools do not offer flexible hours for working students, or campuses for those who live in the suburbs or outskirts — mainly rural, migrant, peasant or indigenous youth.

Thus, the most economically, socially and culturally vulnerable populations are the ones left outside of the public education system: 30% for upper-middle education and 68.5% for higher education. This has to be added to the hundreds of thousands of youth who are

<sup>2</sup> In Mexico, "upper-middle" education is the equivalent to senior high or pre-university studies. Higher education means college education (bachelor's in science or arts).



excluded from college education every year. For the most part, these cases tend to accumulate in the central part of the country (González, 2015).

The promises of the government and educational authorities to improve coverage and drop-out rates are limited to extending “open” and online education, creating a gap between the first rate and second rate education offered by the system itself.

In addition to exclusion, students — and Mexican society as a whole — are subjected to a business-oriented education, which has changed the scientific and humanistic character of public education. Thus, we are stripped of a social right and a fundamental tool to fight for a fair and democratic society.

### ***Social criminalization and youth activism***

Due to the multiple struggles in the country, the Mexican state has opted to criminalize social protest, especially by youth who are organizing to demand their rights. A prime example is the forced disappearance of 43 students from the rural Teachers Institute *Isidro Burgos* in Ayotzinapa. That reflects the extent to which the government is willing to use violence against anyone is mobilizing against its neoliberal policies.

Throughout our history, there have been important student and youth movements, such as in 1968 and 1999 at UNAM, which defended public education as we know it: free, with a scientific and humanistic content. They have also fought to increase access to education, opposed standardized testing, and defended real professional training over a mere competence-based technical approach. They have also fought to preserve our democratic freedoms and put an end to repression, like the students movements of 1986, 1971 and, to a lesser extent, the #YoSoy132 in 2012.

Furthermore, different collectives and youth organizations are acting in solidarity with social movements — like the teacher resistance — and are demanding that the 43 students be brought back alive. They are supporting the defense of native peoples and of the environment; they are opposing the rise of gasoline prices and are seeking to end neoliberal policies that steal the wealth of our country and our social rights. They are acting in solidarity with the student movements of the Americas, and they fight to defend Mexican migrants, while standing up against the authoritarian



Third report on social protest in Mexico. SERAPAZ

and ultra-conservative policies of the US government.

### ***Acting nationally, with an international outlook***

The different attacks against public education and the rights of Mexican youth have made it difficult for people to join forces and articulate their demands in order to move in the same direction. Sometimes they manage to do so, but this is not common.

Coordinating student fights beyond the crisis, with union demands at a national level, is a task that is still to come for the youth and student movements. Likewise, it is necessary to understand that these problems are

not exclusive to Mexico, they are present throughout the continent. We are witnessing similar attacks against youth and education in different parts of the Americas, a situation made clear during the first Tri-National Student Meeting held by the Tri-National Coalition for the Defense of Public Education with the goal of shoring and coordinating the struggles of youth and students in Mexico, the United States and Canada.

During the event, the impact of neoliberal education in North America — and the havoc wreak amongst students — was discussed. Participants concluded that to confront international capitalistic strategies, it's necessary to have a unified international strategy for social and student movements, one that must be built throughout the continent, considering local realities with an eye to global action.<sup>3</sup> This agenda must consider fighting against austerity policies, privatization, the overrunning of the public debt, and state repression and authoritarianism.

<sup>3</sup> The political declaration is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/tiempos-modernos-polakas/declaraci%C3%B3n-pol%C3%ADtica-1er-encuentro-trinacional-estudiantil-m%C3%A9xico-estados-unidos/122311237706835>

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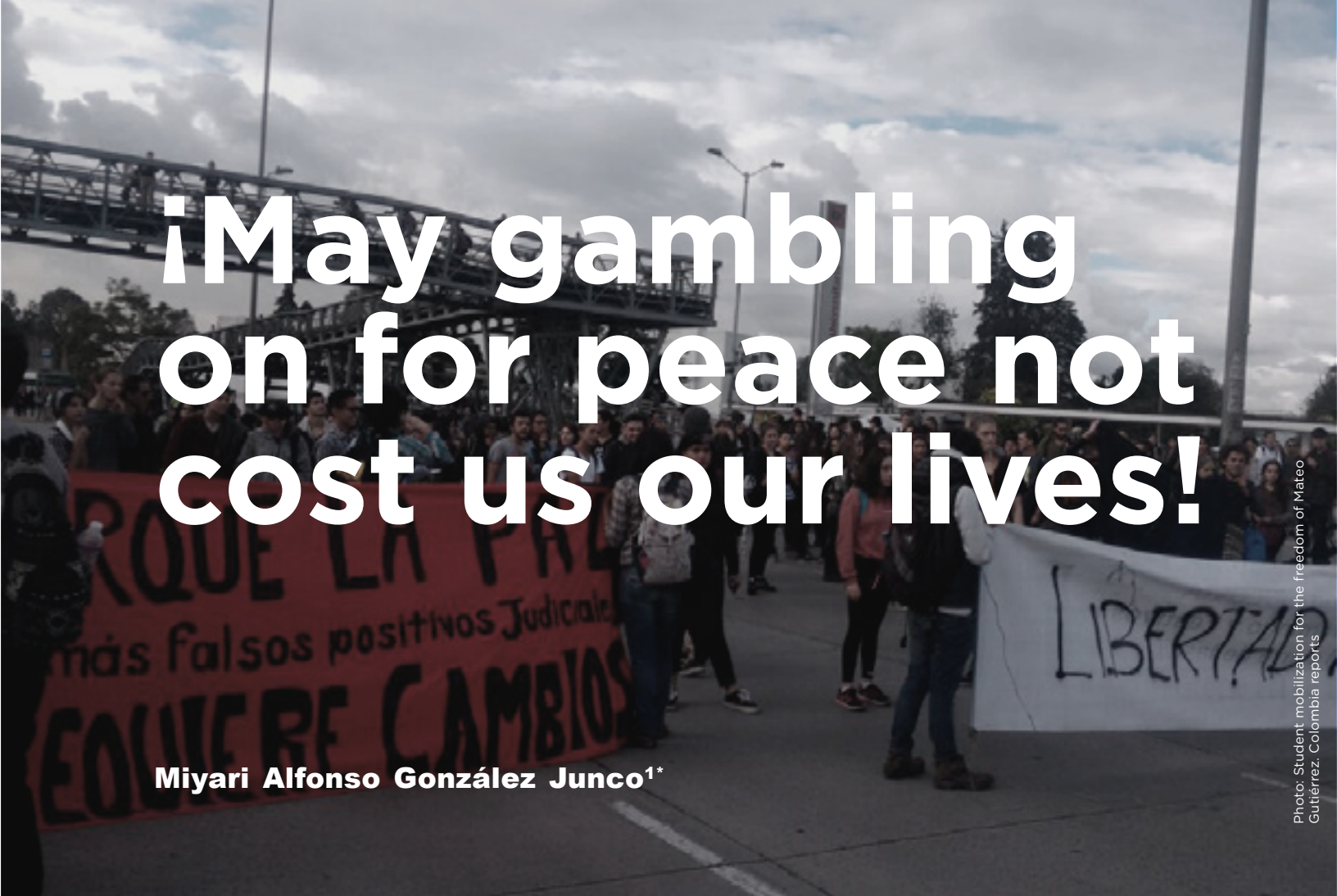
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POSTER OF THE FORUM "DEFENDING EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN"





# ¡May gambling on for peace not cost us our lives!

Miyari Alfonso González Junco<sup>1\*</sup>

Photo: Student mobilization for the freedom of Mateo  
Gutiérrez. Colombia reports

## Summary

The armed conflict that Colombia suffered for more than 50 years not only affects the population where military operations take place. The National Security Office's discourse promotes an idea of the “enemy within” and any hint of disagreement with the ruling government is interpreted as an act of insurrection.

Such stigma has had serious consequences on the physical and psychological well-being of hundreds of students and their families. Death threats, imprisonment and abuses of power by the military and police forces are constantly happening at Colombian universities. Under the current government there has been no substantial change. The constant attacks of the executive power against social movements, especially inside universities, are still a source of concern. We will now summarize the human rights situation during 2016 from

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<sup>1\*</sup> Colombian Association of University Students (Asociación Colombiana de Estudiantes Universitarios) – ACEU. [magonzalezj@unal.edu.co](mailto:magonzalezj@unal.edu.co)



the perspective of different social sectors, particularly the Colombian student movement.

**Keywords:** National government, FARC-EP, paramilitary, student movement, social organizations, human rights and peace.

### ***General situation of human rights in 2016***

We take this opportunity to denounce the arbitrary arrest of Mateo Gutiérrez Leon, a sociology student at the National University of Columbia, which took place February 24, 2017. The accusations made against him by the National Attorney's General Office and the Defense Ministry — meant to label him as a bomber who carried out terrorist acts in the city of Bogota — are yet another charade. The same happened in the cases of professor Miguel Ángel Beltrán, the four students of Antioquia University, and the four students from Surcolombiana University, just to mention the most recent cases. We extend our solidarity to Mateo and his relatives, and we convey our willingness to fight for his immediate release. We call upon all social organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean to declare their solidarity in the face of such painful events and to demand the Colombian Government face the current circumstances facing the country at this time. Peace will never be achieved by criminalizing critical thinking.

The year was marked by important breakthroughs in the peace talks between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia

(FARC-EP), which culminated with the signing of the agreement last August. 2015 ended with the best news for the country: the signing of Point 5, “the Agreement on Conflict Victims”, which was the end result of a difficult negotiation between the parties, with the direct involvement of countless victims (including important sectors of Colombian society, such as students who were also victims of the armed conflict). The signing of this agreement opens the possibility to construct a new scenario for the country in which the different positions of all social actors could be respected. Likewise, the parties agreed to a follow-up and a supervision mechanism for the bilateral ceasefire. Furthermore, not only has an approach being adopted for the agreements that focuses more on gender equality (July); but also the signing of the Bilateral and Definitive Ceasefire (August), and the beginning of the Peace Talks with the National Liberation Army (ELN) in April.

Unfortunately, the joy of the agreement between the National Government and the FARC-EP was eclipsed by the results of the referendum on October 2. By using wording that did not correspond to reality — but that nevertheless resonated with an important part of the country — the most backward sectors made sure that the “NO” vote won by a tiny margin of 0.47% against those of us who, from different corners of the political arena, would have chosen to work for peace with social justice. According to the insinuations by the “NO” campaign's manager Juan Carlos Vélez Uribe, the main

Poster “Students are not terrorists” ACEU Cauca





***“During 2016, the government was petitioned hundreds of times to take assertive actions against the growing violence that affected unions, human rights defenders, and social and political organizations. ”***

points of the political debate were not questioning the agreements reached in Havana. Instead, they sought to use lies to win the popular vote.<sup>1</sup> If we add up the inability of other social actors to explain the benefits of the agreements and the political resolution of the conflict, the end result was that the collective imagination preferred lies over the real elements contained in the agreements.

Beyond that, paramilitary organizations are regrouping in the country. They changed their names (BRACIM, GAO) without having really changing the objectives they pursue, the actors who participate in them, and the practices they use.

During 2016, the government was petitioned hundreds

of times to take action against the growing violence that affects unions, human rights defenders, and social and political organizations. Many have expressed their concerns through organizations such as the Human Rights High Commissioner of the United Nations, the European Union, the Human Rights Inter American Court (CIDH), the United Nations (UN), and a group of 37 US Congressional representatives, chaired by democrat Jim McGovern, as well as other social and political national organizations. Unfortunately, the agencies in charge have not yet provided an effective answer.

According to data by the NGO *Somos Defensores*, during the first 6 months of the year, 279 human rights defenders have suffered some type of aggression (threats, arbitrary arrests and lawsuits, information thefts or homicide attempts), and 35 were actually murdered.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.larepublica.co/el-no-ha-sido-la-campa%C3%B1a-m%C3%A1s-barata-y-m%C3%A1s-efectiva-de-la-historia\\_427891](http://www.larepublica.co/el-no-ha-sido-la-campa%C3%B1a-m%C3%A1s-barata-y-m%C3%A1s-efectiva-de-la-historia_427891)

The culprits are the paramilitary (68%), the Public Forces (10%), unknown actors (22%), and FARC-EP (0.1%). (NGO *Somos Defensores*, 2016, p. 46 and 56). Furthermore, there has been a systematic assassination of the members of *Marcha Patriótica*, including 23 murders in 2016, that add up to 129 ever since the organization was first created. (Caracol Radio, 2017, p. 3). The crimes took place in 19 of the 32 Colombian provinces.

Let us also consider the inhumane conditions in which prisoners are kept in our country, especially those associated with political or social crimes. There is a constant brutality exerted against them by the guards of the National Penitentiary Institute (INPEC), as well as a medical negligence that has caused the death of several inmates. The food they are supplied is in appalling condition. For instance, spokespeople for the political prisoners from Columna Domingo Biohó, yard 4 of the Picota, presented a claim that they have “found objects in the soup or rice like needles, cigarette butts, and pieces of plastics, fibers and glass...” (FARC-EP, 2017, p. 2).

### ***The human rights situation at Colombian universities in 2016***

Having presented a general context of the human rights situation in the country, we now share some figures relating to human rights violations in which the victims have been university students.

We start by acknowledging that acts targeting the Colombian student movement have diminished. However, the severity of the violence by the public forces and criminal organizations still poses a huge threat.

The first event in 2016 took place in Soacha (Cundinamarca) on March 6, when an armed man shot social communication student Klaus Zapata after a soccer match. Klaus was a member of the Colombian Association of University Students (ACEU) and was doing research on the mining sector. He was also investigating the “tierreros” phenomenon (paramilitary groups that

illegally occupy lands to allow people who have fled the armed conflict to live there in exchange for a monthly fee, which is a kind of extortion). He was also looking into small-scale trafficking cases.

The second event took place in the city of Santa Marta against ACEU’s President, Omar Gómez, a sociology student at the National University of Columbia. On March 23, while conducting meetings with social leaders of the area, he was subjected to an anti-terrorist raid by the National Police. First, the leaders’ security staff were stripped of their weapons and IDs, and then they were all detained and kept for an hour.

Thirdly, students from Antioquia University (Cristian Camilo Peña, Alexis Casas, Santiago Ángel and Juan Camilo Ángel), also ACEU’s members, were illegally captured after a march on Labor Day by Antioquia’s Sectional Office for Criminal Investigation (SIJIN). After taking their bags, they were accused of terrorism and spreading FARC-EP propaganda. They spent a month in the dungeons of said institution. They were finally released and the charges against them were dropped due to a lack of evidence.

While this case ended with the liberation of those students, the four students from Surcolombiana University were not so lucky. Roger Murcia Escobar, William Cruz Javela, Édison Fabián González Sierra and Óscar Eduardo Gasca Garzón — all members of the University Students Federation (FEU) — were sentenced to 20 years in jail for criminal activities like producing and selling explosives, and for possession of weapons restricted by the army. But the prosecutor did not present any conclusive evidence of their guilt.

### ***Conclusions***

Even though we celebrate the end of the armed conflict between the Colombian government and FARC-EP, and the start of a dialogue between the national government and ELN, we feel extremely concerned that paramilitary organizations are still on the loose, attacking social

***"No movement towards consolidating peace and reconciliation will be possible if people who disagree with the ruling local, regional, or national governments are threatened".***

organizations and human rights defenders. No movement towards consolidating peace and reconciliation will be possible if people who disagree with the ruling local, regional, or national governments are threatened. Respecting political opposition is essential in a system of checks and balances, and for the rule of law to exist — even more so in our case, where the desire to end the armed conflict has resulted in millions of victims. We do not accept that building peace should continue costing us our lives.

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Political prisoner's spokespeople from Columna Domingo Biohó (2017) denounce claim presented by the political prisoners and other inmates at the Prison's Pavilion 4 Picota. FARC-EP. Taken from <http://www.farc-ep.co/fin-del-conflicto/prisiones/denuncia-de-los-prisioneros-politicos-y-demas-sector-social-recluidos-en-el-pabellon-4-de-la-carcel-picota.html>





# Erosion and violation of the rights of post-secondary students and teachers in Honduras (2009-2016)

**Gloria Indira Aguirre Escobar\***

**Leonardo Lenin Banegas Barahona\*\***

Idea Network graphic file

## **Summary:**

Through this reflection, we document the erosion and violation of the rights of students and teachers at the post-secondary level over a period of 10 years. It is evident that the methods and mechanisms for exclusion and infringement of rights have become more complex.

**Key Works:** Post-Secondary Education, Exclusion, Infringement of Rights, Nepotism.

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## **Creating barriers to student participation in the university government**

One of the first ways of excluding students from the post-secondary system has been through the Academic Aptitude Exam (PAA) which, as a standardized exam, has become exclusionary. This problem was heightened

by the re-election of the rector of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) through flawed and illegal processes as well as other counter-reformist mechanisms that reduce study options (closing technical careers, decreasing options for Bachelor's careers) and do not recognize the University Teacher Statute. These actions have their precedent in 2006 and the infringement of the right to student representation.

The new UNAH Integrated Law extended the term for the University government from three to four years, but reduced the opportunity of re-election. In the face of the crisis generated and strengthened by the university authorities, the National Congress approved that the University Council, presided over by the rector, could appoint the University Board of Directors which was charged with electing the new rector. In this case, a network of nepotism was formed that allowed the interim rector to run again with the guarantee that those who elected her would have been appointed by her. In this way, the university administration of Julieta Castellanos was prolonged from September 2013 to September 2017 in an illegal manner.

After the re-election of the rector, the other positions that had been vacant and had remained interim, were appointed for four years more in the period of 2014 to 2018.

### **Violations of the rights of students and teachers in the national education system**

In addition to the events that developed at UNAH, in 2012 the rector of the National Agriculture University (UNA) was named as Minister of Education. This generated a conflict due to the fact that both are state institutions and they are separated by a distance of more than 200 Km, which makes it impossible to carry out the responsibilities for both institutions fully.

One of the first actions brought about by the new minister was to hamper and interfere with teacher protest and diminish the role of teacher colleges by taking away the state's role of collecting membership dues for the Teacher Colleges (or unions) directly through payroll deductions. Throughout 2013, 2014 and 2015, initia-

tives to privatize public education were strengthened through the "Businesspersons for Education" initiative. In addition, training for middle school careers was cancelled and replaced by a program that did not prove to be completely successful.

There was also an attempt to promote the Literacy for a Better Life Program, directed at youth and adults. It would be a praiseworthy initiative were it not for the fact that the support and financing of it was passed on from the state to parents and students, thus reducing family's resources since this was a mandatory requisite in order to graduate. Students led many protests in all parts of the country until the intervention of the National Congress finally became necessary.

Just when one conflict was resolved another opened up, this time again at the UNAH where students started a protest against the establishment of UNAH academic standards that excluded all those students who had had to repeat the same subjects on more than three occasions and that raised the academic passing rate to 60-70%, without proposing any compensatory measures to support students.

The crisis lasted from May until September 2016, with the loss of the academic period for many career programs and economic losses for the University in wages and salaries. When a dialogue was finally established, it brought the parties together without resolving the points of conflict. It simply postponed and delayed their being worked out.

### **Conflict among universities**

The Honduran post-secondary education system has traditionally been exclusionary. Add to this the fact that no new higher education institution has been approved since 2007. In more than ten years the approval organization has rejected any new project for the creation of other post-secondary education institutions.

UNAH coordinates higher education and by constitutional mandate has the legal authority to "direct, organize and control the higher education system",





Photo: UNAH Student Manifestations, July 2016 in proposal of the repeal of the Academic Standards approved in 2014.

creating government bodies like the Higher Education Council (CES) and the Technical Consultative Council (CTC). However, the UNAH authorities have questioned programs and institutions that they themselves have approved. For example, the department of medicine at the Honduran Catholic University (UNICAH) was under question between 2010 and 2011 and this included not recognizing degrees awarded by this University. This first episode led to 19 institutions requesting that the National Congress approve a new Higher Education Law that would create a body that would be independent of the UNAH, through the creation of a Honduran Higher Education National Commission (CONADESH). However, Congress never approved this initiative calling for consensus at this level.

In 2016 the Minister of Education, who had from 2012 to 2013 served as UNA Rector and from 2013 to 2016 was both Academic Vice-Rector and also Minister, succeeded in reforming internal statutes to be able to become re-elected for a third term as Rector. In a clear act of revenge he fired his opponent, also a professor at the same university. The aggrieved not only submitted complaint before judicial bodies, but also before the Higher Education Council (CES) which, without having the powers of a Tribunal, received the denunciation and made decisions such as not recognizing the titles signed by the UNA Rector and Minister of Education. This began one of the worst episodes of antagonism ever seen between universities. The conflict worsened due

to student protests at the UNA, the firing of teachers in solidarity with the students and those opposed to the Rector.

Force and violence were used to contain the different protest actions, and this was seen in images that spread across the world, becoming not only national but also international news.<sup>1</sup>

These actions were condemned by human rights organizations. In this context, the UNA Rector, making use of powers that were not its own, named a Commission for Academic Audit. UNA officials rejected it. In January, the UNA Rector quit the role as Minister of Education, saying that he would exclusively dedicate himself to the position as Rector. However, the National Congress named an Intervening University Board, preventing him from exercising the position. In all of this conflict between rectors and teachers, the most affected have been the students who have lost academic periods and the parents with eroded finances due to the high cost of living who keep their children in the school through great effort.

1 For a deeper understanding of the impacts of the UNA strike, please see the “Memories of a Struggle” article in this same issue. (Note from the Editor)

In January 2017 the new Honduran Minister of Education was named - Rutilia del Socorro Calderón Padilla, Doctor in Medicine and Master in Epidemiology. She had acted as the UNAH's Academic Vice-Rector from 2006 to the beginning of 2017. This appointment should be interpreted as the establishment of empiricism in state educational administration. In Honduras our institutions provide training in education with technical diplomas, Bachelor's degrees, specialities, Master's degrees and two PhD programs. However, none of these graduates were considered candidates of sufficient merit to aspire lead the country's education policy with scientific methods and techniques and with qualified judgement.

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Photo: Caricature elaborated by a social communicator who is also a Congressman and President of the Education Committee of the Congress that shows the conflict between authorities and students.



# The criminalization of social protest in Ecuador

Andrés Quishpe\*

Photo: larepublica.ec

**Summary:** Human rights violations and the criminalization of social protest are two main issues under the government of Rafael Correa. This article maps the erosion of social rights and how specific social sectors have been targeted.

**Key words:** Ecuadorian government, youth, criminalization and social struggle

## Introduction

The government of Rafael Correa is the longest-running in the history of the Republic of Ecuador. This government was elected as a result of the social discontent with previous neoliberal governments. However, ten years have passed and the reality is very different; Correa's credibility has fallen systematically over the past few years. The 69% credibility rating that he held in 2014 (considered a record) fell to 25.3% in June 2016. This

1. President of the High School Student Federation of Ecuador (FESE) and the Revolutionary Youth Association of Ecuador (JRE) or (JRE)



Photo: defense of the students of the Mejia College. La Republica Journal

means that 75 out of every 100 Ecuadorians do not trust the president's word.

Correa has formally, and on more than one occasion, recognized "a slight loss of support," holding the Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs) responsible. He has said that the people responsible for this situation are his opponents from the social and popular organizations. Furthermore, Correa insists that the media has tried to discredit his government. This absurd discourse collapses under its own weight because the real causes of his lack of credibility are the government's anti-popular political practices, arrogance and the authoritarianism and corruption that are embedded at all levels. The people of Ecuador have seen and condemned what those linked to Correa's government and government officials themselves have gotten involved in. There is also persecution of those who think or act differently from the government's political project. In the last seven years, the attacks have mainly targeted popular and leftist organizations, in particular these organizations' leaders, with the objective of weakening, discrediting and, if possible, getting rid of them.

### **Authoritarianism and repression**

The authoritarian nature of the Correa government has been clearly seen during different popular mobilizations and other activities. Social and human rights organizations have denounced more than 700 cases of

repression and criminalization. Below are some of the most important cases:

### **Dayuma**

In November 2007, only a few months after Correa's election, the inhabitants of Dayuma, situated in the province of Orellana (on the eastern part of the Ecuadorian coast), decided to close down the main access road to their community. The blockade aimed at bringing attention to the need to invest in basic services for the community, such as access to drinking water, electricity and sewage. The government responded by sending a military operation along with the declaration of a "serious internal disturbance", arresting about 25 people who were then prosecuted under charges of terrorism and sabotage. As a result of the government response, Guadalupe Llori became the first woman jailed and accused of sabotage. Llori spent ten months in prison.

### **Criminalization of the National Indigenous Confederation of Ecuador (CONAIE) and the National Teachers Union of Ecuador (UNE)**

Early in 2009 the Ecuadorian National Assembly approved the Mining Law without circulating the proposal or inviting the participation of civil society. The Water Law, which regulates this essential liquid, went through a similar process without consultation with indigenous peoples or any other sector of civil society. In the case of



education, a punitive and unconstitutional evaluation process was imposed on teachers. Schools were militarized, and repression and persecution against teachers followed. On September 29 2009, during a protest organized by the National Teachers Union of Ecuador (UNE) and the National Indigenous Confederation of Ecuador (CONAIE) in the province of Morona Santiago, Shuar bilingual teacher Bosco Wisuma died from a shot from a pellet gun. This case started a legal process against several of the indigenous leaders affiliated with the Interprovincial Federation of the Shuar People -a CONAIE member. The government accused them of being responsible for the teacher's killing. Two years later, on February 1 2011, leaders of the Shuar Federation, Pepe Acacho, Pedro Mashiant and Fidel Kamiras, were detained under charges of terrorism, sabotage and responsibility for the September 2009 protest where Wisuma was killed. CONAIE and UNE are two of the organizations most persecuted and criminalized by the government.

#### **Edison Cosios and the repression of secondary students**

The General Unified Baccalaureate (BGU) was one of the education reforms that was highly criticized and generated a lot of discontent among the education community because it was a makeshift proposal without consultation. The Federation of Secondary Students (FESE) carried out different actions throughout the country, demanding information, consultation and dialogue. Instead students received intense repression. On September 15 2011, seventeen-year-old Edison Cosios, a grade twelve student at the National Institute Mejia, was injured by a tear gas bomb when police invaded the high school facility. He later went into a coma.

High school students and university students, along with their organizations FESE and the Federation of University Students of Ecuador (FEUE), have organized different mobilizations that resulted in 600 high school students being detained between the years 2009 and 2015. The Lawyers Association of the Province of Pichincha stated that high school students have been

doubly sanctioned by the Ecuadorian justice system. They were detained and jailed, most of them were beaten and they were forced to pay between \$100 to \$500 dollars in exchange for their freedom. The police argued that the students damaged private and public property. Later all of them were removed from their respective high schools. In August 2013, President Correa said “the kid who goes out to protest is the kid who loses his place at school” (*chico que sale a protestar, chico que pierde su lugar*). In other words, the government has curtailed freedom of expression and is playing with the human and constitutional right to education. This situation especially affected secondary students from Mejia, Montufar and Central Tecnico school districts in Quito.

#### **Operation Red Sun (10 from Luluncoto)**

On March 3 2012 a police operation shocked people in the Luluncoto neighbourhood of Quito. A special police unit known as the GIR raided an apartment where ten young professionals were meeting to talk about the country's political situation, the communal concept of ‘living well’ and their participation in national protests, including national demonstrations to be held from March 8 to 22, 2012 where people would demand access to clean water, life and dignity. These young professionals were charged for using pamphlet bombs in Quito, Cuenca and Guayaquil in December 2011 during the visit of Colombian President Juan Santos. They were detained and beaten, their human and constitutional rights ignored. The so called “evidence” found by the authorities included: cellphones, laptops, 25 dollars, backpacks, make-up, notebooks and a Che booklet. These professionals are: Abigail Eras, Fadua Tapia (who was pregnant at the time), Cristina Campana, Roys Gomez, Pablo Castro, Cesar Zambrano, Santiago Gallegos, Victor Hugo Vinueza, Hector Javier Estupinan and Luis Marcelo Merchan. During the legal process, their families were also subject to persecution.

For society, this case symbolized the persecution of young people for exercising their rights to organize and to self-expression. The use of a tee shirt with Che's face or a USB as evidence of terrorism became proof of

how the judicial system was being used against these young people. This case came to the attention of international human rights organizations who demanded the immediate release of and reparations for these victims of repression.

### **Seven union leaders from Cotopaxi**

On April 17 2012, a court in the province of Cotopaxi sentenced several leaders to one year in prison for their involvement in the September 30 2010 uprising known as 30-S. The official version is that it was an attempted coup d'état. Among them are Hernan Yanez, Rector of the University of Cotopaxi (UTC), Edwin Lasluisa, National Secretary of FEUE, Xavier Cajilema who was an alderman and head of the Popular Democratic Movement (a political party whose legal status was cancelled illegally), Paul Jacome and Richard Artieda who were framed as the “perpetrators” and Silvia Bravo (another teacher at the UTC) and Carlos Alban who were sentenced for their roles as accomplices and for

covering up. The sentencing was carried out under pressure from the government, even though witnesses' testimonies contradicted the government charges, including the testimony of Colonel Edmundo Moncayo who said that many popular marches were carried out without any disturbance. Most of the incidents during the 30-S happened in the city of Quito.

### **How Correismo sees the role of social organizations**

Under the Correa government, the social sectors have not been seen as a central force for change. Over his 10 years in government, Correa has mobilized social organizations loyal to his policies five times: to reject demands for autonomy by the Guayaquil oligarchy; to show the strength of those who voted for the approval of the new Constitution (2008); to confront the teachers movement who opposed the government's antidemocratic system of evaluation; to be present when the president began his second presidential term; and to do battle with UNE and CONAIE, especially in





2009. However, the government has never mobilized or called upon social organizations to challenge the business elite that rejects any changes to labor conditions, or to question the businessmen controlling the corrupt banks. The banking sector has received most of the benefits under Correa who keeps denouncing destabilizing attempts from the right, but the fact is that his government suppresses social, environmental and democratic organizations. In 2016, the government carried out a legal process against the environmental organization Accion Ecologica (Ecological Action) to take away its right to exist. While the government has close ties with bankers and the industrial sector, it has a tense relation with teachers, universities, indigenous movements and trade union leaders and is continually trying to weaken them.

### **What happened to the government that called itself a “citizen’s revolution”?**

Two factors - social class and the political ideology that guides it. The government of Rafael Correa represents a faction of the Ecuadorian bourgeoisie, guided by a right-wing social democratic conception that promotes a ‘developmentalist’ and reformist project with populist overtones. It is obvious that he has used state power and structures to prosecute social protest. Through its majority in the National Assembly, laws have been passed that contravene the Constitution. The Correa government used, for the first time in the history of the so-called democratic governments, the Criminal Code that was elaborated during the military dictatorship. This code, which was reformed in 2014, deepens repression against social organizations and activists. It represents, in its essence, a perverse legal body contrary to the Constitution and human rights, especially impacting rights related to free organization, participation and opinion.

The government also approved the Code of Citizen Security Organizations, reformed the Public Security Law and approved the Communication Law which persecute all who think and act differently from the Government’s own project.

### **The position of social organizations**

Despite this adverse scenario, social organizations in Ecuador are still active and in a process of revitalization; the divisive attempts of the government in some cases have been defeated and in others neutralized. The main popular and social organizations are currently facing a strong political-electoral struggle, in which, together with several democratic and leftist parties, they are competing for the presidency of Ecuador with the first four places of a total of eight candidates, as well as for several seats for the Legislative Assembly. Translator’s -it (Note: Lenin Moreno of Rafael Correa’s PAIS party was elected president in the spring of 2017.)

One element to highlight is the capacity that many social organizations have to denounce what is happening, including several cases at the international level. At its meeting held on July 11 2016, approximately 42 observations were made by the UN Human Rights Committee regarding requests submitted by different sectors of Ecuador. Thirty of these are on areas of concern: criminalization of protest, freedom of association, freedom of expression, violence against women, voluntary termination of pregnancy, discrimination and violence against LGBTI groups, judicial independence and the rights of indigenous peoples.

In terms of criminalization of social protest, the UN Human Rights Committee regretted that the Ecuadorian State has not provided information on the more than 700 cases of social activists accused of crimes such as sabotage and terrorism or the excessive use of force by members of the police and the army during protests. The Committee requested the Ecuadorian State to guarantee the right to peaceful assembly, to prevent and eliminate excessive use of force by law enforcement and to investigate and punish such cases.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that Article 98 of the Ecuadorian Constitution enshrines the right to resistance, a right that workers and peoples of our country are exercising as an instrument to demand their rights when policies adversely affect them. However, their right to resist has been violated by the Correa regime. Various human rights reports

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## What happened to the government that called itself a “**citizen’s revolution**”?

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from Amnesty International, the Ombudsman’s Office, etc. have established that there has been an increase in the criminalization of social protest and the violation of constitutional and human rights.

Under these conditions, it is the youth sector and its organizations that, having suffered repression, division and persecution, are today visibly taking up the struggle and losing their fear in the process. The recovery of their strength is linked to the resurgence of many popular organizations. Only from there it will be possible to stop the violation of our rights and pave the way to new conditions favorable to the struggle for social justice.

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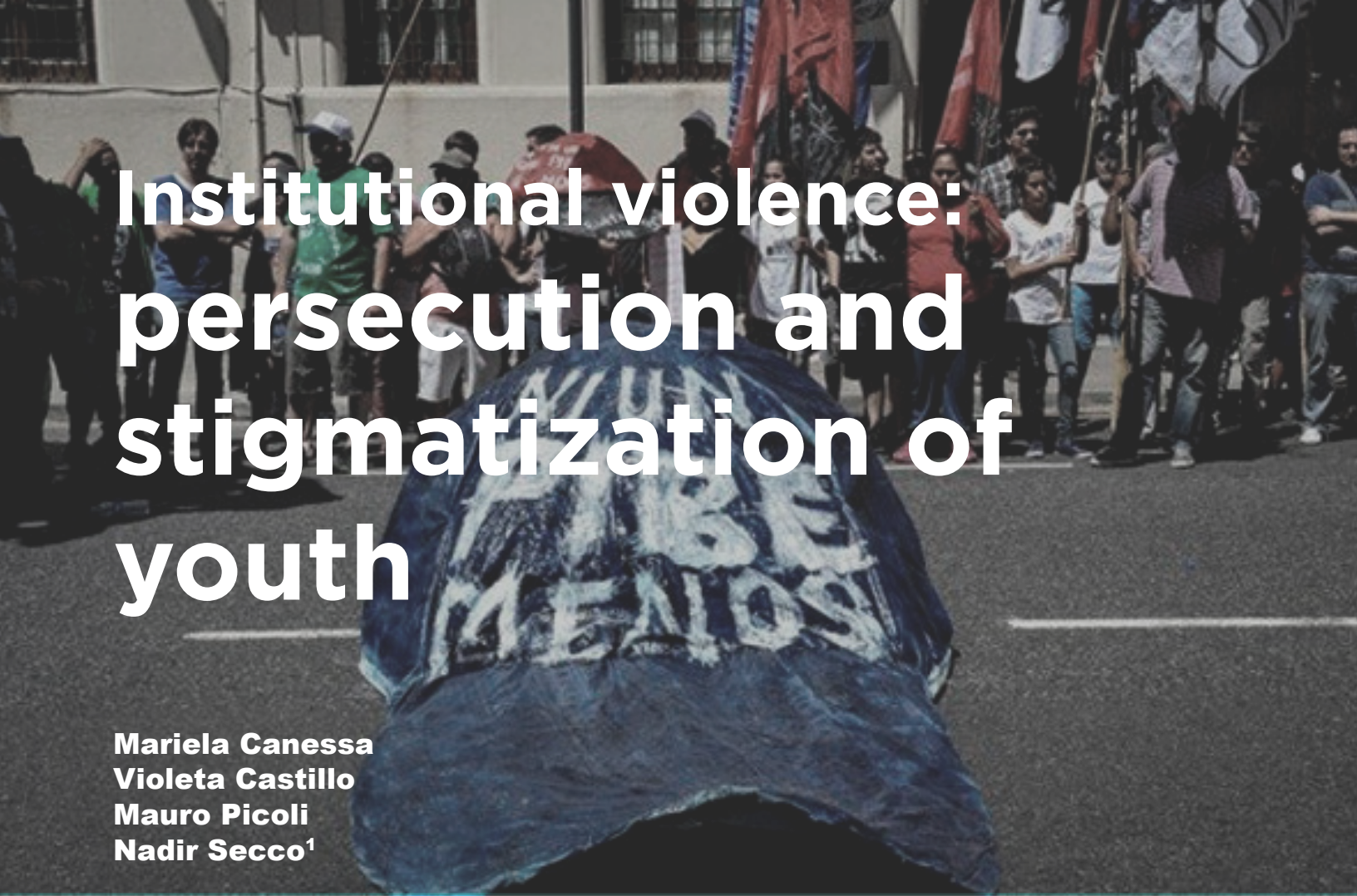
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# Institutional violence: persecution and stigmatization of youth

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Photo: Télam file, La izquierda Journal

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## Summary

Organized youth collectives in union structures that are part of the Argentine Workers Central (CTA) have developed different forms of protest, processes of struggle and organization in the face of the “institutional violence” developed by Argentine state institutions. They have had to do as much during the political and social processes of winning rights, as during the current context in which the state has reactivated mechanisms of repression and criminalization in its deployment of anti-grassroots policies. In this article we describe three experiences that illustrate how the more militant youth wing of a national workers organization approaches this problem, and this article will detail some current political policies that reveal the current context that the youth of our country exist in.

## Introduction

The increase of violence, repression and persecution against youth is a phenomenon that concerns and preoccupies us as the Argentine Workers Central (CTA). For many years, from within social, political and union organizations we have been working to understand the social phenomenon that we have identified as “institutional violence”: a framework of acts that range from detention “due to background check” to extreme forms of violence such as assassination (the so-called “trigger happy”) and physical and psychological torture. This violence went from being isolated cases to becoming part of a systemic and structural problem that involves public officials and creates contexts in which autonomy and freedom are restricted.

In this situation, and concurrent with the consolidation of “youth” as a category of new political and social actors, “the kids” (*pibes* – as they are usually called in Argentina) have turned into the scapegoats of a large part of today’s social problems. During recent years, youth have been key political actors in the development of the social fabric in neighbourhoods, holding the public administration of the State accountable, and the organization for the defense of rights that have been won. Together with the classic conception of youth as “divine treasure” for the development of a national project, the state succeeded in a process of stigmatization, persecution and judgment of certain youth in terms of work, mandatory education, sexuality, political participation, and collectivization, among others. In this way, little by little concepts and common attitudes about youth have come to consider them “dangerous” as a way to sustain social peace. Two emblematic cases are those of the “ni-ni” (youth that neither work nor study) and the debate around the necessity of lowering the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 14 years.

Biases against youth associated with criminality — whether due to a criminal record or even simply their socioeconomic background — face challenges entering

the labor market or obtaining an education. This is part of a phenomenon that is replicated on a global level and to which there is no magic solution. These are constant problems and to date they do not have a firm, grassroots solution, given that related policies implemented in the recent years have not resulted in desired outcomes.

With the rise of a neoconservative government to the national state in December 2015, the process of punitive policies and the dismantling of preventative public policies have intensified. The situations of persecuted youth have been aggravated – especially for those who belong to the non-professional sectors – in terms of physical violence and criminalization of different protests by this social group.

In what follows, we present statistical information and stories about organized youth in the CTA in the provinces of Santa Fe, Córdoba and Buenos Aires, the three most populated jurisdictions of our country, that most rigorously reflect, in our view, the situation described above.

## Buenos Aires Province

The province of Buenos Aires is known for having the security force with the greatest number of complaints for corruption. In the 90s, when neoliberalism was brutally implemented in Argentina, the Buenos Aires police force was accused of having links to “drug trafficking, asphalt pirates, large bands of bank and armoured truck robbers, taking bribes for prostitution and clandestine gambling, ‘arrangements’ with delinquents and the attempt against the AMIA” (1). In addition to the disappearance of Miguel Bru, a student from la Plata, there is also the assassination of Cristian Campos in Mar del Plata and a number of acts that were not covered by the mass media. This was how the Buenos Aires police got the title “the Damned Police.”

According to a report from the Buenos Aires section of the CTA (2), in the first year of the Alianza Cambiemos (*Let’s Change Alliance*) government, with the presidency of Mauricio Macri, there were at least 824



cases of attacks on human rights. If we look at these acts according to *type of attacks*, institutional violence occupies first place with 275 registered cases; and if we consider the *origin of attacks*, 73.44% come from the state apparatus, with 202 being originated by the police. The organized grassroots militancy has carried out a lot of work in order to reverse this situation including: judicial accompaniment in cases, demonstrations in the streets to demand the necessary actions by the state, and the organization of family members of the victims of institutional violence in order to monitor the cases and to develop prevention strategies. One such strategy was the “in case they detain you” campaign carried out by the CTA Buenos Aires youth.

This campaign, that has been carried out since 2009, is made up of a printed flyer that aims to inform youth about the rights that exist in the event they are detained by police on the street, whether for what is most commonly called a “background check”, or in the event of detention for some crime in a police station.

According to the CTA Buenos Aires report, in this province during the first year of the Mauricio Macri government at the national level and the María Eugenia Vidal government at the provincial level (same political party), there were 298 cases of human rights violations, among which 77% included institutional violence and political persecution.

### **Cordoba Province**

The problem of institutional violence in Cordoba, carried out by the repressive political apparatus of the province’s government, is one of the most important security problems in recent years. Police “arbitrariness” is a current tool in the Code of Coexistence updated in 2016, but it is a practice inherited directly from the police doctrine of the last civic-military dictatorship in Argentina.

Within the most important points of this “manual of social coexistence” that governs Cordobans, are the most well founded critiques from those who fight for another model of security, linking respect to rights and

freedoms. *Suspicious behaviour*, which is in Article 70, opens the door to persecution and arbitrary detention. It is one of the worst articles in the new code. It is the tool for detention “for carrying a face”.

A study carried out by the National University of Cordoba, establishes that the majority of detentions for contravention of the Code of Coexistence are related to this provision, and include as victims youth between 18 and 25 years of age from vulnerable sectors, thus criminalizing poverty. The youth detained by the application of this standard spend a maximum of two days imprisoned (in the case of the higher classes), a maximum of two months (in the case of the middle classes), and up to six months behind bars (in the case of the lower classes). In all of these cases, 95% of those arrested do not have access to a lawyer. Some youth claim to have been detained up to 30 times due to application of the provincial code. In this case, the study carried out signals discrimination against people with lower incomes, since this group represents 75% of the cases of youth detained five or more times. According to data shared by the Cordoba Province Police, 70% of those detained due to application of the Code of Coexistence are male youth between 18 and 25 years. On the other hand, the Observatory of Human Rights of the National University of Cordoba (3) registered 59 cases of the use of lethal force by the security forces. In the face of this situation, for the past 10 years “La Marcha de la Gorra” (*March of the Cap*) has been carried out. It is a demonstration organized and led by youth collectives, *kids* from the city’s marginalized neighbourhoods, secondary and university students, young workers — all who suffer police violence daily. This space of resistance and occupation of the streets is one of the most important demonstrations at the social level that is carried out every year. The central themes of this youth action include the demands of justice for the “trigger-happy” cases and the energetic call for the creation of a Code of Coexistence that guarantees rights and does not repress poor people.

Despite the modifications to the Code of Coexisten-

Photo: Sixth march of the "gorra". Overexposed City, Córdoba, Argentina



ce, the actions and contributions of state institutions in the discussion for a model of citizen security, police judgment continues to stigmatize youth, which essentially is the criminalization of poverty and the state of youth as a problematic factor for the law.

### ***Santa Fe Province***

In the province of Santa Fe, increasingly youth find themselves in vulnerable situations in the streets, and this is related to a political system that infringes on rights. While it can be observed that the percentage of youth without access education is increasing, there is greater difficulty in accessing a first job in dignified conditions, and every day stigmatization grows, with youth who are most in need being characterized as agents of insecurity. This latter idea contributes to a very strong sense that the "kids" (*pibes* and *pibas*) should be eliminated from the system or be deprived of their freedom, such as occurs every electoral year when the debate to lower the age of at which minors can be tried as adults (from 16 to 14 years) is revived.

It is well understood that this is not a problem that can only be resolved in one way, and much less that has one trigger. This is where the security system, the political apparatus, the judicial power, and the mass media enter into play. These systems use everything at their disposal to distract attention and change the real focus of insecurity that really has specifically to do with the security forces themselves. In the city of Santa Fe, provincial capital, the CTA Youth, that groups together different sectors of workers, decided to tackle these subjects with the actors themselves, developing some activities. One of them was the screening of a film, "G. An official crime", that makes visible the corruption and institutional violence of an



era. The workshop activity included the film's director, Daniel Otero, in attendance as well as students from the School of Secondary Teaching for Youth and Adults (night schools). At this event, the kids from "The Voice of the People" were present — neighbourhood artists who recount their own reality using rhyme and hip hop. Also, together with different groups of students from the night schools, a variety of workshops were carried out in which the situations of institutional violence were addressed using theatre with performances and debate afterwards. For the workers organization it was interesting to be able to work with youth on this subject so that they could know their rights, make visible their issues and not normalize discriminatory practices.

### ***Final words***

The accounts and statistics presented about some jurisdictions in our country describe the profound problem of institutional violence against youth that worsens under the political and economic conditions of a new national government that clearly does not favour the inclusion and attention to this sector of society. To the contrary, today we see in Argentina a government that promotes individual competition, finger-pointing, discrimination and stigmatization, persecution, repression and criminalization of social protest, added to a lack of interest in generating policies that contain and solve the most serious situations of social vulnerability. In response to the structural exclusion experienced as humiliating personal failure, to the configuration of labels and stigmas, to the isolation of social identities, the CTA Youth assume the struggle and resistance to the different forms of institutional violence with a politics of protest in defense of all human rights, with organization of the social, student and labour movement, and with processes of class and popular culture awareness-raising.

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# RESIST:

## The Responsibility of this Generation

Rafael Bogoni<sup>1</sup>

Photo: La República

**A**ccording to the dictionary, to resist means to put up resistance, to not give in, to defend one's self. It is precisely this role that we are responsible for today, and that we take on as youth, the students and the social movements that resist in each one of the countries in Latin America and the world.

We are living through a historic moment, in which we see capitalism returning to gain ground, after one of its worst crises. A strong conservative wave, charged with a sentiment of hatred, is passing through the world and generating a climate characterized by the repudiation of politics and the traditional ways of doing politics. We see its effects in the entire world, particularly in Latin America, where we have suffered losses after a good period of progressive and leftist governments in various countries.

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1 OCLAE Executive Secretary, as a representative of the National Students Union of Brazil

In Brazil, we clearly see the ascent of the conservative elites and an intensification of the class struggle. After thirteen years of progressive governments led by Lula and Dilma, with a wide coalition that spanned from the political left to the centre, which achieved important social and economic advances, that are currently being destroyed by those who attack Brazilian democracy and today usurp power.

In thirteen years, we saw our country emerge from extremely low social and human indexes, lifting millions of people out of hunger and extreme poverty to transition them into active work. Millions of youth entered the universities, which was unthinkable for many before who could not access higher education because they lacked the material means to survive. Or, in many cases, they were unable to study because instead they had to help their families to put food on the table. We managed to double the number of students in universities before the Lula government, with almost 8 million

youth in a university or higher technical track. Today, we see black, poor, and Indigenous people in university, and not only there, but also in the airports, since, as we say, today the poor also fly. Both spaces were previously only for the elite -who get angry they have to study and travel alongside poor, black, and indigenous people. An elite made up of old, white, macho and homophobic men unable to tolerate seeing women empower themselves and enter the presidency, black or Indigenous people respected and protected by public policies, or the LGBT population having a place in society, coming out of the closet, empowering itself and benefitting from public policies.

This is what is behind everything that we are going through. The elite want to regain space. That is why they united in a consortium between the financial market, national industrial sectors, large communication monopolies and the judicial system, in order to guarantee that the crisis is not paid for by the richest, but rather by workers, by youth, by poor people. In this way, the worse National Congress that we have had in our history continues to pass laws such as the Constitutional Amendment Bill (PEC 55 or 241) that puts public investment in

social areas below the rate of inflation, practically freezing investment in health and education, for 20 years. Or like the Reform, for the worse, of secondary education, approved a short while ago by decree without any dialogue with students. This when there was already a long debate process within the education community, together with students, about a deep and true reform.

Now there are bills in progress, like the Social Security Reform, which will increase the retirement age; the Labour Reform, which seeks to increase the workday and remove rights that were historically won, making work relations more precarious; and the bill “School Without Party”, that decreases the decision-making power of teachers over what can or cannot be taught in classes, making it impossible to discuss topics such as sexual diversity and other subjects with “ideologically left content”. Such a law prohibits teaching “content contrary to parents’ religious or moral beliefs”, as if youth could not think for themselves and are easily influenced by teachers. It would be laughable if it were not so ridiculous. Not to mention the ridiculous “anti-Lula Law”, that says that a presidential candidate that

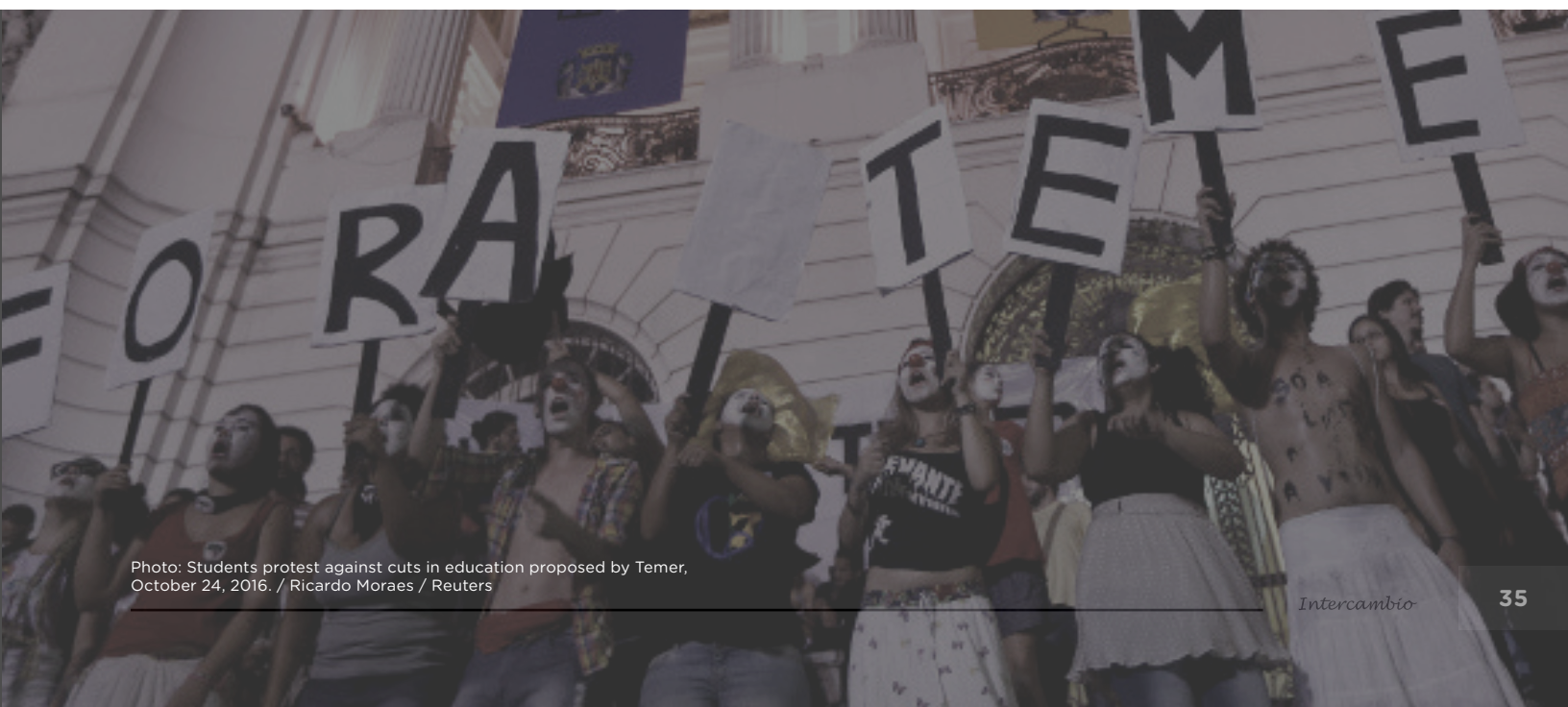


Photo: Students protest against cuts in education proposed by Temer, October 24, 2016. / Ricardo Moraes / Reuters



was already president on two occasions cannot run again (this only applies to two people: Lula and Fernando Henrique Cardoso). They made this law out of fear that Lula, who today appears in first place in the polls for president in any scenario, would be re-elected in the 2018 elections.

We have sought to strengthen and create processes for unity, that in Brazil today are made up of two action fronts of the social movements and political parties: the Popular Brazil Front and the People Without Fear Front. Each day it becomes more necessary, in the countries and in the region, to have the precious popular unity.

And as if we were not sufficiently shocked, I could continue to talk about the millions in cuts to investments in education, scientific research, culture, etc. But I would rather end as I began, speaking about resistance. Throughout the history of humanity, the grand revolts and revolutions, in the large confrontations that we have had, youth have always had the central role of RESISTING. And today it is no different. Together with workers, women, blacks, Indigenous peoples and others, it is our responsibility, as this generation, to resist any setback to our rights. This is our role that history now calls for us to take on. We will not allow one more chapter of history to be written by the

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conservative elites who have always devastated our people. We remember the struggle of educators like Anísio Teixeira and Paulo Freire; intellectuals and liberators like José Martí, Simón Bolívar, José Artigas, O'Higgins, José de San Martín, Sucre, Miranda, etc.; revolutionaries like Fidel, Che, Frida, Anita Garibaldi, Zumbi, Allende, Chávez, Sandino, Farabundo Martí, Zapata and so many others that continue to inspire the dreams of generations for a new world, a new society, a new man...UNITY AND RESISTANCE!

*"History is written by the people, history is written by men (and women), history is in our hands, this story has just begun."*





# Violation of the rights of indigenous youth

in the highlands region of Veracruz, Mexico.

**Pedagogical group “Totlahtol Yoltok”**  
**“Our word lives”\***

Photo: El Dictamen / Quadratin Agencies

The region of the highlands (*Montañas Altas*) has 61 municipalities, out of which 23 belong to native peoples. According to their geographical location, especially inside the mountain range, some of the localities preserve their original language, dress code and culture. Unfortunately, they are also the ones who suffer the greatest poverty and discrimination. The towns in the valley preserve their native language and clothes to a lesser extent, but they also share poverty, marginalization and social inequality.

### ***The difficulties of the indigenous youth to leave their environment and “infiltrate” mestizo society***

“I have always wanted to be a teacher in order to have a better life standard, and to be somebody, so that the *pinomeh* (mixed European and indigenous background) would not look down on me. But it is difficult for women to leave our communities and study, because an indigenous woman does not have the same opportunities, since we face a triple discrimination: for being a

\* Region of Orizaba and the High Mountains of Veracruz, México.

woman, indigenous and poor. It is tough, especially if you do not speak Spanish. You do not get the chance to study or work, not even as a store clerk. You have to be very strong to overcome your fears, and stop being you.” (A. Rafael, interviewed on February 22, 2016.)

Angela is a 22-year-old student who is currently studying the eight semester of an Industrial Engineering program at the Technological Institute of Orizaba (ITO). She dresses as any other young woman, and does not look indigenous at first sight. But she feels that if she spoke her native language as she used to when she was back home, or if she wore what she used to wear in her community, perhaps she would not be able to fulfill her dream of becoming a professional.

“It is easy for us to recognize who is indigenous. But when we are at school, we are all infiltrators: we dress, speak and try to think as they do, only to be accepted.

It frightens us to see how our people are treated out on the streets, because of how they dress or the language they speak. The hatred is easily seen, smelled and felt. Even if you are efficient in your work or at school, if you do not talk or think the way they do, your job opportunities are slim or non-existent. (A. Rafael, 2016 interview)

There are few studying opportunities for indigenous youth, since economic, geographic, political and educational exclusion factors work against them; in spite of the fact that the government’s 2011 National Study Plan promotes “linguistic, social and cultural diversity”, even if only in theory. In reality, schools and the educational system themselves promote an institutional violence, one that is legitimated and creates differential treatments, procedures, red tape, and conflict resolution that vary depending on the background of whoever they are dealing with.

The 2011 Study Plan proposes curricular standards that “establish a certain type of global citizenship [...] that will allow the country its entrance to the Economy of

Knowledge and become a part of the community of nations that base their development and growth on the progress of education.” (p. 42). But its definition of a global citizen is one that fits the profile of somebody who can live within the neoliberal economy and its consequences. For instance, the ruling economic system expects citizens to exploit their labour and the natural resources located in indigenous lands. But that goes against the indigenous cosmovision of living in harmony with the environment, one that they actively defend. Additionally, families take their young children to work with them, since they also contribute to the family budget. Thus, children are absent from school for certain seasons. Many times public schools refuse to take them back because of their absenteeism and they lose the school year and lag behind the rest. If children do not have to migrate with their parents, they stay with older siblings or grandparents so as not to lose the economic help given to them by governmental PROSPERA<sup>1</sup> program, because if they miss 3 consecutive school days without a justification, the amount they receive is reduced. If they accumulate 12 absences, their two-month support is withdrawn altogether. In smaller communities, schools are more tolerant towards children who attend schools irregularly, even if this causes a curricular lag. Thus, in standardized tests those districts always show lower achievement levels.

In indigenous rural communities there are schools for kinder-garden and elementary school, but none for higher levels, so the possibility to continue studying is considerably decreased. If these children want to get an education they have to migrate, and that exposes them to discrimination. Therefore, they become “infiltrators” or practice “invisibility of difference”, something which

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1 PROSPERA is a program by the Ministry of Social Development which has two modalities: co-responsibility and non co-responsibility. It provides a subsidy to almost 7 million Mexican families to help them with food, health and education.



Photo: Geographic location of Las Altas Montañas Veracruz, Mexico

affects their identity. They have to adapt to a value system that is foreign to them, or as Angela describes it: “to infiltrate by hiding my identity to survive.”

### ***Educational policies contribute to the exclusion of the indigenous youth from school***

For the indigenous youth of the high mountains region of Veracruz, it is not easy to get a college education. Even if they do get it, it is hard for them to get a related job. In the case of women, the only option they have left is to start a family, do handcrafts in the style of their community or work out in the fields to support their families. In the case of men, if they were lucky enough to finish high school, they will have to decide whether to take on carpentry in a rustic workshop, do agricultural work or migrate to the US.

In November 2016, Public Education Minister Aurelio Nuño Mayer announced a program of “school re-concentration,” which included the transport of students

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**THEREFORE, THEY BECOME “INFILTRATORS” OR PRACTICE “INVISIBILITY OF DIFFERENCE”, SOMETHING WHICH AFFECTS THEIR IDENTITY. THEY HAVE TO ADAPT TO A VALUE SYSTEM THAT IS FOREIGN TO THEM, OR AS ANGELA DESCRIBES IT: “TO INFILTRATE BY HIDING MY IDENTITY TO SURVIVE.”**

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who attend one hundred thousand small community schools to larger centralized ones. When he participated in the Social Mobility Summit of 2016, he highlighted that out of 200 thousand elementary schools in the country, 100 thousand held only 14% of the students in scattered communities, with the “worst results and the least investment”<sup>2</sup>.

This policy threatens the rights of indigenous peoples, since “concentrating” their youth in more urban areas - to receive a “better quality” education, according to the authorities, does not guarantee any respect for cultural diversity or local indigenous ways of knowing and learning. They are not capable of acknowledging diversity or looking after the needs of our peoples. The results could be ethnocide.

We will keep on fighting until our children and youth have access to an education that does not threaten the identity of our communities; and respects our cosmovisions, language, dress and traditions. Students require favorable conditions to be educated. It is essential to demand that schools allow them to receive an education that guarantees their full development as individuals, and as a people.

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2 <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/ultimas/2016/11/19/>

“I have always wanted to be a teacher in order to have a better life standard, and to be somebody, so that the pinomeh (mixed European and indigenous background) would not look down on me. **But it is difficult for women to leave our communities and study, because an indigenous woman does not have the same opportunities, since we face a triple discrimination: for being a woman, indigenous and poor.** It is tough, especially if you do not speak Spanish. **You do not get the chance to study or work, not even as a store clerk. You have to be very strong to overcome your fears, and stop being you.”**

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A photograph showing a large group of students in light blue shirts sitting at wooden desks outdoors on a grassy field. They are all looking down at papers or books, appearing to be in a study or writing session. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

# “Memoirs of a struggle”

The student movement to defend the  
National Agricultural University (UNA)  
Catacamas, Olancho, Honduras

(Student strike, November 2016)

GIO\*

Photo: Otras voces en educación

## Summary

This article summarizes accounts of several protagonists in the recent strike by the National Agricultural University of Honduras' (UNA) student movement. It brings us closer to the problematic issues that led to the student strike which was a legitimate tool in the face of the constant violations of the human rights of students and teaching staff by university authorities and the repressive Honduran state.

The participants were three male students, two female students, a mother and one professor who was arbitrarily fired. Their names have been changed in order to protect their identity in the national context of institutional violence.

**Key words:** education, student strike, human rights, criminalization, violence.

## The context

\* Student from the National Agricultural University, Olancho, Honduras. This article is based on interviews carried out by the author, in collaboration with María Trejos Montero, teacher-researcher, Costa Rica: e-mail: [mariatrejosmontero@gmail.com](mailto:mariatrejosmontero@gmail.com)

In my country, the education sector is affected by a government which does not support education - a government internationally recognized for its high level of corruption, for preferring weapons over books and specialized police squads over improving education infrastructure, for imposing education authorities at their convenience and not in the people's interests. The student strike occurred in response to the constant and growing institutional and state attacks against the social interests of UNA:

*"The situation that provoked the student's strike was a chain of corruption and violations of human rights... The university had turned into a platform for personal projects and even partisan purposes."* (Professor<sup>1</sup>)

In this context of struggle and general resistance by different sectors of our peoples, and in the face of the growing onslaught by the capitalist government, the secondary and post-secondary student movements gained momentum.

### ***Teachers respond to the commercialization of higher education and resulting exclusion***

Defending public education means defending students and education workers' rights:

*"Fortunately, conscious teachers raised our voices... This provoked the unjust firing of 45 teachers due to our opposition to the academy being sacrificed in return for private projects. In this context, students also raised their voices..."* (Professor)

### ***Students organize against institutional violence***

*"Our strength is the university, at all times we identify as university students, wearing our blue shirts, in the face of*

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1 One of the 45 professors fired. To learn more about the teachers' situation, refer to article "La huelga de la UNA: contexto y enseñanzas" ("The UNA strike: context and lessons"), available in research- [www.ideanetwork.ca](http://www.ideanetwork.ca).

*personal and family persecution and the criminalization of our protest."* (Ana)

We called this strike due to the university crisis and the imposition of regulations and pedagogical and administrative procedures that went against the right to public education and to defend autonomy and the right to freedom of student organization.

We suffered the abuse of power that went so far as to change student regulations with more strict and arbitrary sanctions, and reject student representation... While they continued making deals with university goods and funds, the student body was forced to keep quiet and live under these miserable and inhuman conditions.

What nourishes our movement?

*"...what motivated us to continue with the struggle were the other student organizations, our classmates and every person who took part in the strike in one way or another. And the hope that our university could change and be better."* (Antonio)

### ***We grow individually and collectively***

*"I feel great. It has been an incredible new learning experience, and a process by which, thank God, through working together we became one big family. I learned to work with others without making distinctions and to trust our colleagues in struggle. The base of our success was unity, where we all changed because we learned to truly work as a team."* (Antonio)

### ***Human rights: a necessity***

*"Our university is focused on agriculture. In the beginning, our lack of knowledge of legal matters made it difficult to make decisions. That is why I focused on human rights. We made the legal aspect one of our priorities in order to know what to do next, how to keep the university going*

*in terms of production as well as in legal matters. I really enjoyed becoming involved... We took strength from standing next to representative organizations that have supported these social causes: COFADEH, CIPRODEH<sup>2</sup> and others". (Ana)*

### ***Military repression in response to peaceful student resistance***

We had different confrontations with public officials and persons sent by the authorities, although the student body never carried out violent acts. The only weapons we had were our cellular phones to capture and document these acts of aggression.

It was a shameful and cowardly act when a university employee rammed a tractor into us. However, the Ministry of Education distorted the events in various media, only to protect their reputation.

*"They constantly tried to evict us from the university. They cut electricity and water. We are talking about an area of 400 hectares which created much confusion. Given all the open spaces, we were not sure from which direction they would enter. The guards would come in and beat us... We were threatened with death, with losing our scholarships and being kicked out. I even witnessed interference by the Minister of Education, provincial directors and district directors who called our families. One of my teachers was threatened with losing her job if she was not able to convince me to abandon the struggle." (Ana)*

Many students were charged before the courts.

### ***Lessons for teachers and our families***

*"...the young people maintained all the courses and credits and developed a system to give the university stability.*

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2 Committee of the Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), Center for Research and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH).

*The impact was such that it led to intervention by the National Congress, higher education and the presidential office who convened an Intervening Board." (Professor)*

*"My children taught me that struggle means to give your all, to not be afraid and to stand in solidarity. To always move forward with bravery and courage. They were very disciplined and tenacious. I learned this from my children and every student who was at the front of the strike. In the beginning I was afraid, but when I realized that there were other young people being mistreated, I said to them, "you are right, you can't stay here. This is your struggle, this is your moment, and you must stand with them." (Mother)*

### ***We women in this struggle***

*"My experience was difficult due to the system of internship and production in the university. I became involved in the strike because I identified with it, and I recognized that I had personal qualities that were useful for the student movement." (Ana)*

*"As women we are seen as the weak or sentimental sex. When we felt this common struggle as women, it meant that we must defend quality education as well as demand respect for our physical and emotional integrity. There are still many who believe that because we are women, we cannot perform in certain labour settings and that our place is at home or behind a desk. We cannot allow this to continue, especially when we are asked for sexual acts in exchange for passing a course... Our struggle as women goes hand in hand with the student movement because it unites us to achieve equality of student rights and integrity as people." (Didi)*

### ***We redefined the principles of unity***

When we united our voices, we brought together an entire national congress, and were able to push for the approval of an Intervening Board. While the university authorities attacked and threatened, we were listened



to by the educational community and received their support. It is not easy to be away from our families for such a long time and sacrifice time with them during holidays.

*“We demonstrated that the education received was not in vain; the values that we learned at home are deeply rooted in us. We are a generation of change that is worthwhile, one we can bet on in our country, and when we observe such movements we must take advantage of them.” (Didi)*

In spite of the efforts to reach dialogue, there was no will on the part of the authorities. We continued to pressure for the resignation of the Minister of Education and the rector of the institution as one of the main people responsible for this situation, and for a constitutional decree for an Intervening Board, which up until now has had positive results and changes.

*“And so our student struggle was absolutely justified. We were able to remove the incompetent and selfish authorities.” (Antonio)*

#### ***What do we wish to say to young students?***

*“Never lose hope or give up, because then you will fail in your struggle. We spent more than two months without any response. But then we trusted the students’ voices; we are truly the majority and when we decide to embark on something we can achieve many things.” (Marco)*

*“As brothers and sisters in struggle we are the beginning of a long dreamt-for university reform. It is a historic moment, one which marks our generation and future generations whom we hope will continue to fight. We are doing well. The main objective remains - that our university becomes stable once more in every aspect, recognized in our country, in Latin America and the world.” (Antonio)*

*“When a student keeps silent, the future of a country disappears”*

**Sources:** interviews carried out by the author and collaborator, students, professor and mother from the education community of Olancho.





# Education in Cuba, FIDEL'S LEGACY

The 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2016 the Cuban people and peoples world-wide received with great sadness the news of the death of Fidel Castro, revolutionary, referent for critical thinking, constructor of utopias and realities, and inspirational figure for generations who have fought for a better world.

In beautiful Cuba, Caribbean island, a liberated territory of America, Fidel was able to guide the victory of the Cuban people, and face down United States imperialism and its illegal economic blockade. Many are his teachings and enormous is his legacy, in these lines it interests us to highlight only one: making the right to education for all Cubans a reality, an education that not only teaches to read and write, but was also one that teaches the whole child, is humanistic, supportive and promote critical thinking.

As IDEA in our 17 years of existence, we have learned of the transformations in Cuban education, we have learned from their experience, and we have admired their achievements in medicine, in the arts and science. We are encouraged that in such little time and with massive youth participation, Cuba was able to reach every corner of the country and eradicate illiteracy.

Cuba is the only Latin-American country where the entire population knows how to read and write, and enjoys universal coverage



Photo: miradasecontradas.wordpress

of primary education and guarantees of access to higher education. All education is public and without cost, not only due to the lack of tuition or service fees, but because the State provides school meals and all education materials necessary for children and youth.

The achievements of Cuban education speak for themselves. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization –UNESCO– Cuba is the only nation to reach the education objectives established by this organization during the period 2000 to 2015. Among the main ones, to extend and improve primary education; universal coverage of primary education; guaranteed lifelong access to education for youth and adults; and eradication of illiteracy as the most prominent. These achievements can be understood in the light of a people committed to education and the fulfillment of the State’s responsibility to guarantee proper educational funding. Although Cuba is a country with many shortages, it boasts the highest investment in education in Latin America, with 14% of its GDP.

All these achievements are accompanied by a liberating and pedagogical project, influenced by the ideas of teacher, poet and revolutionary José Martí, the revolutionary spirit of Ernesto “Che” Guevara, and the wisdom, principles and revolutionary strategies promoted by Fidel Castro, who worked for towards the transformation of a fairer society. Education in Cuba is and will always be, the great legacy of Fidel.

Fidel... your dreams of justice, dignity and rebellion will guide us in the struggle for a better world, and the defense of education by and for our peoples.

*!Hasta Siempre, Comandante!*

Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas - IDEA



# Campaign for “sanctuary schools” in Canada

**Larry Kuehn**

Photo: mobilization in Toronto in favor of migrants- Notimex

President Trump's attack on undocumented immigrants in the U.S. has created a flow of refugees across the border to Canada. These are people who fear that they will be deported from the U.S. back to the country they have had to flee.

Canada and the U.S. have an agreement that refugees must apply for status in the first country where they arrive. If an individual applies at the Canadian border with a request for refugee status, they will be rejected. However, if they sneak across the border, they can be arrested, and then can apply for refugee status in Canada. The Canada—US border is almost 9 thousand kilometres and most of it has no fence—and certainly not a wall. This has led to the strange practice of people risking their lives by crossing an open border in -20 or -30 degree Celsius freezing weather and asking to be arrested. They are then taken by the police to a facility where they can stay while applying for refugee status.

Individuals without legal immigrant status are some-

\*BCTF

Traducido por Carmen Miranda Barrios

times refused services available to those with legal status, but campaigns on behalf of refugees are trying to change that.

The city of Montreal has formally become a sanctuary city, while the City of Vancouver has adopted an “access without fear” policy. It ensures people without legal status will not be reported by city employees to immigration officers and will not be refused city services available to all residents.

In British Columbia, a coalition called “Schools for All” unites the migrant rights groups such as Sanctuary Health and No One Is Illegal with local unions of the BC Teachers Federation in a campaign to raise awareness of the problems immigrants without status, pushing local governments and school districts to adopt sanctuary school policies.

The campaign has some British Columbia school districts making the institutions under their jurisdiction “sanctuary schools.” These districts have assured parents that their lack of immigration status will not lead to their children being refused school registration, nor will their uncertain immigration status be reported to federal immigration agencies. District authorities will not cooperate with any attempt by immigration officials to locate undocumented people via the public school system.

The movement for sanctuary schools has arisen because some parents are unwilling to send their children to school for fear that they could be detained and deported. “We understand the barriers in registering kids in other school districts and the real fears these families experience due to their information being shared, of being rejected or detained and deported,” explains Sanctuary Health spokesperson Byron Cruz.

No One Is Illegal also campaigns for the Canadian federal government to end its agreement with the U.S. that prohibits refugee claims for people who are currently in the United States. The existing policy means that anyone from Latin America who gets across the border to the U.S. from Mexico is barred from applying for Canadian refugee status—another form of a wall.

Harsha Walia from No One Is Illegal says “It’s immense in light of what’s happening in the U.S., ensuring that locally and municipally, our communities are taking a stand that says people are welcome, that refugees are welcome, that undocumented students are welcome, and doing it in ways that go beyond the symbolism of it.” These are not universal sentiments in Canada, however. The right-wing Conservative party is selecting a new leader, and several candidates are staking out an anti-immigrant platform. The Trump effect from the U.S. has made it more respectable for politicians to take positions that normalize views that have been marginal in the past.



# Political declaration of the 1st Trinational Student Gathering

Mexico, United States of America, Canada



Fuente: Poster "1st Student Trinational Meeting"

*In March, 2016, student activists from the USA, Mexico and Canada met at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City for the First Trinational Student Gathering. The following is the declaration that emerged from the event.*

As participants of the First Trinational Student Gathering, organized by the Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education, after analyzing the current context of public middle and higher education in Mexico, United States and Canada, we conclude:

That the privatizing offensive on education as a social right, is exacerbated by budget cut policies, subsidies to

private education, and the new Free Trade Agreement being negotiated between governments of our three countries, the Trans-Pacific Partnership. It includes the interference of businesspeople in defining the content of study plans and the direction of universities and education as a whole. It seeks to deliver the final blow to dismantling education as a human right, selling it to the highest bidder. It is also accompanied by the criminalization of social struggles by teachers and students who defend public education, exacerbating the exclusion of academic communities in decision making and eliminating the small spaces in which we exercise democracy in our institutions.

In the face of the aforementioned context and the necessity to recover the social purpose of education, we pronounce ourselves in this First Transnational Student Gathering for:

1) The demand to include free public education on the agenda of the three countries (Canada, United States and Mexico), including university education. In Mexico, the federal government tries to evade its responsibilities by implementing the idea of “self-management” in basic education and policies oriented towards efficiency in middle higher and higher education (with the reduction of semesters and investment in the private sector, that takes more from universities and bachelor’s degree programs than they invest in them).

In this same vein, Canadian students do not have access to government subsidies, in order to guarantee free education, on the contrary, the NAFTA agreements have declared that resources should not be used meet public education’s needs, and instead introduce students to the need to recur to student debt. Adding to this is the problem that only 4% of the student university population in Canada comes from Indigenous communities, in conditions of institutional marginalization, a situation that limits their cultural development and interaction with the rest of the students. This percentage is evidence of the policies of discrimination, exclusion

and criminalization, when it is compared to the percentage of the Indigenous population that is in Canadian prisons which reaches around 30%.

For US students the context does not change, since private investment in prisons is greater than that which the US government allots to education. To the contrary, in addition to dealing with a university system that is impossible to access for the lowest income sectors, African American and Latino American youth, are affected by a government policy of criminalization. It is enough to examine the rates of arrest and imprisonment of Latino and African American youth, especially among those youth that for a variety of reasons were not able to be in school for more than basic education. As such, we demand that free access to university be added to the agendas of the governments of Canada, United States and Mexico.

2) To coordinate our actions so the impacts of economic agreements such as the TPP are made visible in the Northern region of our continent. We demand that these agreements be reversed, as they are total contrary to the interests of our societies. Since the structuring of these applied economic measures will deepen the already existing problems among university communities and of education as a whole. It will also increase the rate of exclusion and marginalization of different proposals to those that subordinate all social necessity for the survival of the transnational market.

3) That public university in Canada be financed by funds dedicated to the debt and that private education stop being financed with public monies. The influence of private corporations, specifically the mining companies, on decisions regarding content for training of specialized students must end. The marginalization of Indigenous students in Canada must cease and these students’ identity be recognized in the face of the Euro-centrism of university officials.

4) An end to the criminalization of youth struggles. An end to unjustified imprisonment of Latino and African American students in the United States and youth in general in throughout the continent.

5) Greater resources must be dedicated to public sector education institutions. No more diversion of funding for health and education to prisons or other areas.

6) Respect for the social purpose of university education, against the systemic attack on the critical nature of education in our three countries. In Mexico, exemplified by the gradual dismantling of alternative education projects with social commitment, such as the case of the College of Sciences and Humanities (CCH) and the Institute of Middle Higher Education (IEMS) of Mexico City. We reject all interference by financial bodies in decision-making, evaluation and accreditation of our universities, and as such we demand the real and effective integration of students in spaces of institutional representation. No more exclusion of students from decision-making.

### **Special Resolutions**

In solidarity with the Veracruzana University that in the face of violence unleashed against the university community by the state government and embodied by the current governor Javier Duarte; in the process of struggle for democratization and with respect to our comrades' institution's budget in Veracruz we declare our support by joining in demanding an immediate solution to their demands.

An explicit call for the Mexican government to recognize the education model of the rural teacher's colleges (*escuelas normales*) and to put an immediate end to the project to eliminate them

An end to the intimidation and harassment of students of the National Autonomous University of Mexico

(UNAM) Law Faculty for their defense of university democracy.

The defense of public education is a responsibility of all society and as such we, the Trinational Student Gathering, demand from presentation with life of the student teacher comrades were disappeared from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero. They were taken alive, and we want them back alive!

Let us fight for a new model that transforms the objectives and direction of public education and coordination of the sectors involved in this struggle.

The resolutions of this first Trinational Student Gathering, will be distributed and presented in the 12th Conference of the Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education, to be held May 13, 14 and 15 of 2016 in Vancouver, Canada.

## What is the IDEA?

The Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA) Network is a flexible network that brings together organizations in the Americas that share a commitment to protecting and improving public education, seen as essential to democratic development and the protection of human rights.

The network works with other civil society organizations concerned about the impact of "free" trade agreements and other transnational neoliberal policies on social rights. While the idea for a hemispheric network emerged from a meeting of teachers and students in Mexico City in november, 1998, IDEA's structure was broadened and formalized at the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas conference held in october 1999 in Quito, Ecuador.

## What does IDEA do?

The **IDEA** network carries out research, sets up communication networks, publishes documents and organizes conferences and seminars related to neoliberalism, trade agreements and the defense and democratic transformation of public education. It also organizes hemispheric campaigns to defend public education and the defenders of public education.

The objective of these activities is to lay the groundwork for an understanding of the impact of neoliberal policies on education in the Americas and to develop alternatives to ensure inclusive, democratic and quality public education.

## IDEA also has two hemispheric subnetworks: an education researchers' network and an Indigenous Educators' network

The researchers' network involves researchers working with educator, student and parent organizations in collaborative work that enables us to produce studies that analyze and compare similar situations and policies in a range of American countries.

The indigenous educators' network enables First nations educators to communicate with their counterparts in other countries of the Americas and to share strategies and ideas related to defending culture and autonomy within a publicly funded education system.

## COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The work of IDEA is directed by a Hemispheric Coordinating Committee made up of representatives of the following organizations:

- National Union of Educators (UNE/Ecuador)
- Confederation of Education Workers of the Argentine Republic (CTERA)
- Federation of Central American Teachers' Organizations (FOMCA)
- National Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE/Brasil)
- Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT)
- British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF/Canada)
- Latin American and Caribbean Students' Organization (OCLAE)
- Steve Stewart. Technical Secretary

## CONTACT

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The IDEA Network makes available to teachers, students and the academic community of our continent, the electronic portal of the magazine Exchange, in which they will find various studies on public education and its defense, as well as calls to publish in future issues.

[www.revistaintercambio.org](http://www.revistaintercambio.org)







# *Intercambio*

Revista bilingüe de la Red SEPA, sobre  
estudios de la educación pública en América



Mural "El pueblo a la Universidad y la Universidad al pueblo", de David Alfaro Siqueiros . Ubicado en la rectoría de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México