

SALVANET

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Focus on
Media and
National Reality

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In Defense of Independent Media:

The Struggle for Freedom of the Press in the Post-war Context

The following are excerpts from a speech given by award-winning journalist Mauricio Funes during a conference organized by the Peace Center (CEPAZ) on the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords. The text has been edited and translated by Salvanel.

The New Civil Authoritarianism

“For those of us who practiced journalism in the 1970’s and 80’s and continue practicing it today, there is no doubt that there exists a difference between these two contexts that merits recognition, but it is not enough. It is not enough because we are facing obstacles that are more difficult to identify. The exercise of authoritarian and exclusive state power is expressed to some degree in the way that journalism is practiced and in the tolerance that exists on the part of those in power towards certain kinds of journalism. The same exclusion used to design economic policy in our country can also be perceived at the level of the social communications media. We are facing a new kind of authoritarianism, a civil authoritarianism just as exclusive and marginalizing as military authoritarianism....It is more difficult to identify,

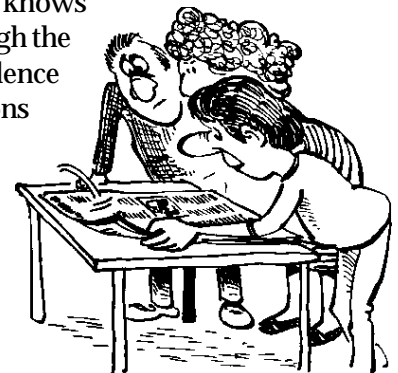
more difficult to combat, but nonetheless effective.”

The Challenge of the Non-aligned Media

“What has allowed an authoritarian and exclusive exercise of state power if not precisely the absence of a climate of absolute freedoms, in which the lack of freedoms of the press and of expression are key pieces?...[Some analysts] assure that one positive aspect in the area of human rights has been the creation of public opinion spaces and new communications media, some of which are alternative media that face commercial difficulties to survive. I believe that these commercial difficulties faced by the so-called alternative media, or media not aligned with the government, are insurmountable. These difficulties have nothing to do with the functioning of the medium, or with its efficiency or its resources. The peace accords have not been able to create a dynamic that allows for the existence of alternative media in the country, media that delivers to the people not what they like, but rather what they need to know to transform their situation.”

Democratizing the Media

“[Some analysts claim that] the best example that there is no control of information here is the existence of 120 radio stations, 12 television stations, and who knows how many newspapers. As though the existence of more media is evidence that the country’s communications have been democratized, and that there exists a professional and independent journalistic exercise that informs people of what they need to know to transform their situation for their own benefit. This is not



Even the New York Times has recognized the concentration of media control in a few hands as a problem in Latin America. Writing in an editorial on May 7 2001, Tina Rosenberg pointed out that many media outlets serve as vehicles to promote the owners’ personal or political agenda, adding that weak or lacking broadcasting regulations discourage diversity of media ownership. “In El Salvador, one owner controls...90 percent of the TV market, and the only newspapers with any circulation both speak for the nation’s tiny upper class....Even the best news outlets tend to be openly ideological and there is no...separation of news and opinion, so the owners’ views can permeate reporting.”

Rosenberg, “The Monochromatic Media of Latin America.”

N.Y. Times, May 7, 2001

so. There are more television stations, more newspapers, more radios, but communications are even more corrupted than before. What causes this corruption? The allocation of advertising, public as well as private....In almost 17 years of journalistic practice...I have realized that if there exists an enemy of democracy, its name is commercial advertising.”

The New Form of Censorship

“State publicity continues to be distributed under discretionary criteria. It is used to punish or reward the media outlet according to their editorial slant.... The government has no reason to act under this criteria. When [President Francisco] Flores speaks and wants everyone to listen to him, he should be on all the stations and his message should appear in all the newspapers because not all of us read the same papers or watch the same stations. The businessman...can act under this criteria, putting his advertising where there is a specific market, a captive audience for his product. But the state cannot, and it frequently does, punishing or rewarding according to the editorial slant....With this type of example, we cannot say there exist freedom of expression and freedom of the press in the country....What is worse, there is a desire to give the appearance that things have improved when in reality we have entered into a process of regression. Today it has been discovered that the best way to sabotage independent communications is no longer directly censoring them, but rather using the resource of advertising investment. If a media outlet does not receive advertising, it drowns, it closes, and, what

would be worse, it changes its editorial slant and aligns itself, which is what has happened with some communications media today.”

The Fourth Estate

“It is not true...that the press is the fourth estate. If there exists a power after the branches of government, it is the advertising agencies. They are the ones who decide what will be published and what will not be published, for one simple reason: if information is released that is not in the interest of a company, and you publish the information, that company’s advertising package is withdrawn....The gasoline that fuels your television machinery runs out, which means cutbacks in personnel and spending, lack of resources to practice investigative journalism, and we fall into a vicious cycle. There is a need to combat this alliance, this limitation, by providing more resources to the independent media....There will come a time, although I hope not, in which the information will become standardized....Here, either you are with the government-aligned media, or you are against them.”✚

Mauricio Funes is the news director of Canal 12, a privately-owned television network that is recognized for providing the most independent television news coverage in El Salvador. In 1994, Funes was awarded the María Moors Cabot Prize for advancement of press freedom and inter-American understanding by Columbia University. Funes conducts a daily 90-minute news interview show that examines crucial issues of social and political reality. His daily editorial commentary, “Sin Censura,” or “Uncensored,” was taken off the air in March of this year, reportedly due to pressure from government officials. Recently, Funes received wide support and recognition as a proposed candidate to the presidency under the FMLN banner, but he claims no political affiliation.

From the Editor

Greetings from El Salvador, and welcome to this year’s third edition of *Salvanet*! Heavy rains are falling and the mud is flying as the political campaigns for next March’s presidential elections get underway. In this issue we’ve chosen to look at the media because of its critical role in shaping national reality and public opinion. Now more than ever, as the major political forces battle a highly contested presidential election, we see more manipulation of information, especially as many media owners have strong ties to political parties and represent the interests of the financial elite. Important issues that need real solutions, such as social violence and access to public services, are being used as tools to gain a political advantage. In this very polarized context, we continue trying to listen to the independent voices and present critical analysis that will help us see and interpret the reality of the masses, whose interests often get left behind in the shuffle. We invite you to reflect with us on media and its role in democracy, and we hope you enjoy the articles we’ve brought together.



CRISPAZ, Christians for Peace in El Salvador, was founded in 1984. We are a faith-based organization dedicated to mutual accompaniment with the church of the poor and marginalized communities in El Salvador. In building bridges of solidarity between communities in El Salvador and those in our home countries, we strive together for peace, justice and human liberation. As an organization, we are non-partisan and committed to non-violence.

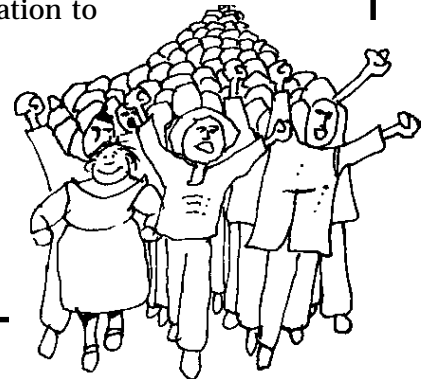
Comments or questions regarding *Salvanet* can be sent to:
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El Pueblo Unido... The People United

The Center for Labor Studies and Support (CEAL) recently hosted a delegation of U.S. Latino labor leaders, the majority Salvadoran, representing the two million Latino workers affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA). The delegation was headed by Linda Chavez Thompson, vice-president of the AFL-CIO, and included representatives from unions in the asbestos, construction, public employees, restaurant and hotel services, and clothing assembly sectors. In a joint declaration, the delegation participants reaffirmed their commitment to struggle for fair, democratic, and sustainable development, demanded the resolution of multiple cases of documented labor rights violations in El Salvador, and expressed their commitment to continue building links of solidarity between labor organizations in the U.S. and El Salvador to support one another in defense of human rights and labor rights of Salvadorans in both countries.

The Fourth Mesoamerican Forum, entitled "For the Self-Determination and Resistance of the Peoples," was held from July 21-24 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, with the participation of representatives from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. The declaration developed in the forum states: "The complex reality of the region demands the strengthening and consolidation of a Mesoamerican movement that can offer in a unified way a firm resistance to the current projects of trade and investment. For us, it is key to extend social organization, accompanied with processes of literacy and education on the subject of trade-investment, and to improve communication...between networks, organizations, and movements on the local, national, and regional levels. An immediate goal is to advance in the formation of an alternative project that is born from and for the people."

The Ecumenical Forum of El Salvador has continued meeting periodically to promote dialogue among the historical churches and to define lines of common action that address the current national reality. The forum includes representatives from the Lutheran Church, the Calvinist Reformed Church, the Baptist Federation, FUNDAHMER(CEBES), the Anglican Church, the Emmanuel Baptist Church, and Catholic parishes and communities, among others. The current focal point of action is mobilization to stop the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), working to educate about the realities of free trade in both the church base communities in El Salvador as well as the sister parishes and communities in the U.S. Additionally, forum members participated in activities surrounding the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in Cancún, Mexico, in September.



Freedom of Expression: Report from Article 19

Below are excerpts from a report on freedom of expression in El Salvador, submitted to the United Nations Committee on Human Rights. Issued in June 2003, the report was compiled by Article 19: Global Campaign for Free Expression, an organization working worldwide to combat censorship by promoting freedom of expression and access to official information.

“In spite of the constitutional recognition of its importance, in practice the right to freedom of expression is regularly flouted. As actors in a very young democracy, Salvadoran politicians have not yet accepted that they should be open to greater criticism than ordinary figures and frequently threaten journalists with criminal lawsuits for defamation. There is no recognition of the right to access information held by public authorities and little movement towards the introduction of legislation to that effect. On the contrary, a lingering culture of secrecy and authoritarianism within government institutions has led over the last few years to the introduction of different pieces of legislation that tend to obstruct access to information. Journalists also continue to suffer physical violence and harassment, including by the police. The perpetrators of these attacks are rarely brought to justice.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

“Everyone has the right to the freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”



“The media themselves have, over the last decade, become increasingly homogenised. This is particularly true of television broadcasting, where few independent voices are left in a sector dominated by commercial interests and foreign investors with close ties to the government. Worryingly, the present government also appears to have embraced financial tactics to ‘punish’ media for critical reporting, most notably by instituting advertising boycotts. The overall effect of this has been seriously to hinder independent and critical reporting in El Salvador. Commentators have gone so far as to say that ‘nowadays the government does not use authoritarian mechanisms of censorship or repression, but it participates in advertising boycotts and corporative alliances that diminish the practices for freedom of expression.’”

Media Environment and Regulation

“There are five daily national newspapers with a circulation of more than 250,000 in El Salvador. The two most popular are *El Diario de Hoy*, a conservative newspaper closely aligned to the government, and *La Prensa Gráfica*, considered a more independent newspaper. There are fourteen television stations, thirteen private and one government-run, and more than 150 different radio stations.

“Although this paints a pluralistic picture, it must be noted that, particularly in the broadcast sector, ownership is concentrated in the hands of a few large companies. The three main TV channels, which together command a 90% audience share, are controlled by one privately owned company. In addition, most media—print as well as broadcast—are closely aligned to political parties, resulting in a relative dearth of quality independent reporting.”

The Broadcast Media

“In academic circles, television broadcasting in Latin America is considered to be ‘one of the most commercially successful, monopolistic and undemocratic industries in the world.’ This is certainly true for El Salvador, where many media owners have close ties with the political elite and have developed into an extremely influential force.

“The radio spectrum is somewhat more pluralistic. It is reported that there are more than 150 different radio stations, although less than one-third of them carry news or current affairs programmes. In the capital, there are four morning opinion shows and several interview shows.”

The Print Media

"In general, the print media are reported to be 'the most dynamic media outlets in El Salvador.' However, it must also be noted that the largest print media have well-known political allegiances and are strongly polarized. There also appears to be significant owner interference in editorial policy, leading to practices of self- and internal censorship, which tend to reach a peak around election times. The most notable example occurred in 2000, when *El Diario del Hoy* demoted one of its editors for publishing an article criticising the then-governing party, ARENA. The editor subsequently resigned from the paper."

▄▄ Nowadays the government does not use authoritarian mechanisms of censorship or repression, but it participates in advertising boycotts and corporative alliances that diminish the practices for freedom of expression. ▄▄

Freedom of Information

"In El Salvador, there is no recognition in legislation or in practice of the right to access information held by public authorities. It appears that, despite the civil war having ended 11 years ago, a strong culture of secrecy still persists within government. Journalists have identified this as one of the main obstacles to reporting on issues of public interest."

Harassment of the Media

"The media in El Salvador are frequently harassed by police and other public authorities, as well as by private actors. The national Human Rights Defender, Beatrice Alamanni de Carrillo, states in her most recent Annual Report that El Salvador has been suffering a 'progressive deterioration of tolerance and degradation of social cohesion.' Journalists are subject to verbal and physical attacks, particularly in response to allegations of corruption or other criticism of the functioning of politicians and public officials. The Salvadoran Association of Journalists, APES, reports that in 2002, journalists were exposed to 41 separate physical attacks, including from the National Civil Police. In most of these cases, the violence and/or threats went unpunished." +

Take the Plunge!

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- youth activists
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Call or write one of our offices for more
information, or visit our website:
www.crispaz.org



Saint Francis and the Cosmic Christ

Lord Jesus, two graces I ask of Thee before I die. First to feel in my soul and in my body, as far as possible, the sorrow which Thou, sweet Jesus, didst endure in the hour of Thy most bitter passion; second, to feel in my heart, as far as possible, that extraordinary love with which Thou, O Son of God, wast inflamed, to the point of willingly undergoing so great a Passion for us sinners.

Out beyond the confines of my self, by his pure gift of himself, I had entered into the life of the true mystery which ruled the invisible universe, and I had clutched, as only a poor person can, the revelation of true love.

What counted in life was not to do, but to love.

What saved the world was not our wisdom, and not our action: it was the power of the love of God, lived in each one of us.

On the human level Christ's life was a failure. But on the level of his love, it was a masterpiece that gave new life to all creation.

By dying for love, Christ had exalted the whole world.

Death had been vanquished. (Carretto, Carlos, I, Francis, pp. 89-90).

by Anna Hoekstra

New life to all creation!! Imagine! As a volunteer for the Commission for Justice, Peace, and Ecology of the United Franciscan Family in El Salvador I have witnessed their love in practice. I am so honored to be a part of the renewing work of the Holy Spirit through the Commission here in El Salvador.

The commission is made up of 12 members who meet monthly to discuss current issues and decide how they can be an agent of justice and peace in society. Of the twelve members, two work full time to manage the small one room office that belongs to the commission. My work for the past six months has been with Paty, the coordinator of the Environmental Education Program (PEA). The program's objective is: "to develop a process of environmental education, form human values in the areas east and peripheral to San Salvador, transforming attitudes and practices in the population of participants, at the personal and collective levels, positively influencing the environment."

The program has initiated the involvement of people from parish communities in Soyapango, a sprawling mass of skinny streets, small houses, stray dogs and lots more. Soyapango is where many of the working class people of the greater San Salvador area call home. It is in one of these communities that I live with my host family. The family belongs to a large Catholic parish called Santa Cruz, and I have been blessed to be included as a member of their community by being invited to meetings and gatherings.

I have to admit, at first I thought their ideas were a little archaic; for example spending three to four nights a week in church meetings or activities, in addition to their normal work and other church involvement. One month we met

every night to pray the rosary to the Virgin Mary. It seemed excessive to me, but I have seen here, probably better than any church context I have ever been in, a true commitment to and formation of the church community. This parish has over 400 regular attendees who are divided into smaller faith communities of 20-30 people according to where they live. Each group has a community name and meets together twice a week in a member's home to pray or learn Biblical stories. The families of the community group get to know each other, share with each other and help each other in personal and physical needs. In contrast to my North American cultural instinct to always do things for myself and not to depend on others, my experience as part of this community has helped me learn what is necessary for healthy community, a very challenging yet exciting practice.

My work has been with people from these communities through the environmental education program. The program (PEA) has, over the past year and a half, completed its educational work in seven parishes in Soyapango. PEA offered day long workshops, each with several themes, such as environmental risk management and worldwide agreements on defining environmental problems and steps to solve those problems. My work has involved researching the material presented at the workshops. I also meet regularly with the program's central ecological team and have been involved with the activities of the Justice and Peace parts of the Commission.

Recently I spoke with the United Franciscan Family Coordinator in El Salvador, Friar Buttarazzi, about the Franciscan order. Brother Gratian Buttarazzi, Ordene de Frailes Menores (O.F.M.), originally from New York, has volunteered in El Salvador for the past 14 years and in Central America for the last 38. Buttarazzi studied post-graduate

philosophy at Dukane University in Pittsburg, PA. He studied theology and was ordained at the Saint Francis Seminary in Mount Alverno, New York.

I understand that, unlike other orders of the Catholic Church, Francis de Assis wrote very few rules. Why was this?

Francis was the son of a wealthy merchant and the culture in which he lived saw Christ as king of the Universe, a dominating figure. To follow Christ in this context was to obtain titles of nobility by joining the army, fighting and winning. But Francis found himself a prisoner of war, and when he was released after a year he changed his view of Christ. He took another look at Jesus and found that God had divested in him a divine love. Jesus was born poor in Bethlehem, worked as a carpenter for 15 years and preached for 3 years, then was persecuted and killed. It impressed him that God put up with such injustices, that he left the Eucharist to form a community of fraternity on earth. Christ saw poverty as a way to promote harmony, to promote dignity and freedom according to the gospel message.

Francis found it necessary to write only a few rules for a way of evangelical life: following Christ's example through poverty, living in fraternity, showing God's love through ministering as servants. He realized God's expression of love is in creation, that all are brothers and sisters in the brother/sisterhood of creation relating to God as creator.

What makes the Franciscan Order different from other orders in practice?

Normally Catholic orders formed evangelical communities. The monks or nuns would go out from that community and walk with the lowly, the marginalized. They worked to promote a Christian culture. But the Franciscan order went out, found the needy and formed community there, where the people were. The Friars and the Clares would earn money and work alongside the people and live as they lived, giving the Christian example. Occasionally the friars would come together to pray and share. So as opposed to living in an evangelical community they lived in mixed communities.

What was the central mission of Saint Francis of Assisi? Is it the same now for the Franciscans?

It began as a pilgrim approach to go to the needy and live among them. In the late 19 and early 20th centuries due to worldwide societal changes it became necessary to work out of parishes. Now we are moving back to the pilgrim approach.

Now the challenge is the postmodern way of thinking: the new liberal economy, religion without God, tarot cards, the culture of image, body, dress, and the international market, etc. The positive thing about postmodernism is that it gives importance to each individual. For example, technology and science—we have more knowledge of the human body, we know causes of diseases

and can treat many more of them than before. But this new liberal individualistic model makes people's consciences indifferent to the whole picture. We cannot approach women's issues and ecological issues and poverty issues as separate causes; we need to see them as interrelated. If you see women as an issue you need to see ecology as well because to work she has to cut down trees and do the washing in the river. If you are going to take on the cause of the poor, you need to recognize women as poor. This is the reality in which we work.

What is your biggest challenge as the Coordinator of the Franciscan Family in El Salvador? Your biggest blessing?

One of the challenges is to get Franciscan Seculars involved in social movements of health, minimum wage, the ecology issue, the child worker issue—there are 146,000 young people in this country between the ages of 12-17 who work 8 hours a day in addition to their studies. Biggest blessing... being a member of the Franciscan Family- seculars, religious, friars; working with and learning from the poor.

Saint Francis's greatest desire was to see the world through the eyes of God and to live by the example of Jesus, whose perfect love for us led to his death and resurrection. Through his resurrection he redeemed the world: men, women, animals, plants, mountains and rivers. Thus, Saint Francis strove to see Christ as cosmic, manifested in all of creation. The Christ who touched the diseased, spoke to prostitutes, and ate with the tax collector, is the Christ the Franciscans follow today. The Franciscans attempt to look at reality through the eyes of a Cosmic Christ, seeing all people as equally important, all problems as interrelated, all components of creation as our brothers and sisters in relation to God as creator. Living out the gospel message of love is the most challenging and most rewarding example to follow.✠

Anna Hoekstra is a CRISPAZ long-term volunteer working with the United Franciscan Family in Soyapango, San Salvador. Anna has been with the CRISPAZ team since May of 2002, starting out as a Summer Immersion Program intern and later committing to a long-term placement with the Franciscan Family. She is originally from Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Anna Hoekstra displaying her composting worm box at the Environment Day fair.



The Unresolved Gang Problem

Note from Salvnet:

Youth gangs as a part of the problem of social violence in El Salvador are not a new phenomenon. Many attribute the growing problem of gangs and gang violence to the exodus of Salvadorans to the United States during the armed conflict of the 1980s. The two largest gangs, the 13th Street or Mara Salvatrucha gang and the 18th Street gang, were born in the barrios of Los Angeles, leading to the theory that gangs proliferated in El Salvador following the end of the war as gang members returned to their home country or were deported from the U.S. In reality, the presence of youth gangs in the country pre-dates the armed conflict, although the past decade has seen a steady increase in gang activity. The continued lack of opportunities for youth, the absence of government programs providing comprehensive attention to the needs of minors, persistent poverty, and family disintegration are among the contributing factors that have allowed youth gangs to thrive, especially in poor, marginalized communities. The absence of an effective public security plan has allowed the situation of social violence among youth to reach excessive proportions.

On July 23, President Francisco Flores launched his Plan "Mano Dura," a crackdown operation on gang-related activity authorizing hundreds of members of the Armed Forces to work with the National Civilian Police (PNC) in the communities most affected by gang violence. In his justification of the plan, Flores attributed the gang problem to the disarticulation of the military police at the end of the war, and argued that the PNC does not have sufficient resources to handle the current situation. Flores announced in the same moment his proposal for an anti-gang law, which would criminalize the act of belonging to a gang and require harsher treatment of minors. After a series of debates and forums of public discussion, the legislative assembly agreed to pass several penal code reforms to toughen penalties for street crime, including harsher punishments for those belonging to gangs that commit crimes. As of this writing, more than 2,000 arrests have been made under the Plan Mano Dura. The crackdown on gangs, coming as it does with only seven months remaining in Flores' five-year administration, has been criticized both as a political move to gain support for the upcoming presidential elections and also as a reflection of 15 years of an inadequate public security plan on the part of ARENA governments.

The following editorial was published in the August 13 edition of Proceso, a publication of the Central American University Jose Simeón Cañas, UCA.

The Flores administration has decided to face the problem of the gangs with pure and simple force. The efforts to look for a more wholistic solution to the challenges imposed by the country's marginal youth, gangs being the most conflictive and critical part of this situation, have been left behind. Force and violence impose themselves where dialogue and reason have failed; that is what has happened to the Flores administration. The government is constantly using coercion because it has no more arguments left to deal with a social problem that ran like water through its fingers.

The spokespeople for the government intend to legitimize something that has no legitimacy; that is, the use of the state's violence against a segment of the population that has been left systematically unattended. They are following the old strategy of demonizing those who are in the sights of the state's coercion. The governmental propaganda against the gangs reminds us of those campaigns against the "communist and terrorist murderers," launched throughout the seventies and the eighties. These campaigns created an environment aimed to justify the murders, disappearances and tortures of anyone who followed an idea or an option different than those that were approved by the official power. The logic is simple, but effective: the human dignity of the "enemy" is ignored, in order to treat him like he deserves to be treated, as a wild beast against which it is necessary to proceed without any consideration.

The discourse of the government is therefore simple: the "enemies" of the government are the gangs. It is an extremely dangerous enemy. The members of the gangs are murderers, delinquents, and terrorists. According to the government's spokespeople, there are approximately 30,000 young people involved with gangs. What has to be done to face such a threat? For Flores and his team, the answer is as clear as water: to use the force and violence of the state without any other considerations.

Certainly, Flores and his advisors are not alone in this crusade against the gangs. There have been those who, from outside the government, have clamored for more drastic measures--such as, for instance, the death penalty--against the members of a gang. According to an editorialist who works for a right-wing newspaper, the gangs are an extension of the FMLN, similar to what the

student organization called MERS was in the past. There have also been those who, with sarcasm, have underestimated the sociological and the economic approaches that try to explain the problem of the gangs in a more integral way as a problem that is related to the social and the economic exclusion in which a considerable part of the young population lives. These voices not only go along with the game of the government, but they also contribute to the creation of an environment that encourages intolerance, abuse committed by the authorities, and an authoritarian attitude.

In segmented societies such as the Salvadoran one, the marginalized social groups are those that end up facing the harshest part of reality. They are the ones that have less economic, educational, and cultural opportunities; they are the ones that live in the worst conditions, and those who develop the most precarious moral habits. Material poverty, moral poverty: that is the daily reality of the Salvadorans who belong to marginal groups. Among the young population of El Salvador, there is a segment that lives in extreme poverty because of the prevailing social and economic arrangements. This is the breeding ground of the gangs. Obviously, not all of the young people who live in extreme poverty are part of the gangs. Many of them survive without breaking the law. Many others, without the tattoos and the gangs, do whatever they can to get their daily bread. For others, a gang is a life option, along with all of the risks involved.

No one is irremediably condemned to become part of a juvenile gang. To believe such a thing would be absurd. But it is also absurd not to understand that the gangs are one of the few life options that the inhabit-



Kelly Creedon

For some, everything would be all right if the gangs would not make much noise. And if they would not break the law, wear tattoos, steal, and kill each other. In other words, if they accepted their situation of social exclusion with resignation.

ants of the marginal neighborhoods have, because they live surrounded by misery and a hopeless future. If the other options are considered, it is clear that they are not

better: to clean windshields, to sell candies on the streets, to carry bags in the market, or to wait for a kind person to offer them a temporary job. For those who are more conservative, the worst that these marginal young people can do is become part of a gang, get tattooed all over their bodies, and paint graffiti on the walls. That makes con-

servatives uncomfortable, because they feel that they cannot control what is happening in the neighborhoods where the poor live.

For those to whom the existence of the marginal groups is something natural, everything would be all right if the gangs would not make much noise. And if they would not break the law, wear tattoos, steal, and if they would not kill each other. In other words, if they accepted their situation of social exclusion with resignation. Their rebelliousness--an apolitical rebelliousness, marked by senseless violence against themselves and against a society that rejects them--cannot be tolerated. The reason is that this violence shows an enormous crack in the social tissue, and it challenges the tranquility of the powerful, whose levels of well-being and consumption prevent them from realizing what it means not to have the bare essentials to survive day by day.

Being young and socially, economically, and culturally marginalized does not imply, automatically, that one is a gang member, but these are some of the contributing conditions. Certainly, these marginalized young people can choose to belong to a gang or not, but this is one of the possibilities they have to either fulfill, or to frustrate their lives. To offer them other possibilities to grow as individuals and as a group is a challenge of primary importance, if the objective is to resolve the problem in an integral manner. To create those possibilities is not simple and it requires a considerable amount of money. It is politically profitable to chase them and put them in jail, that is, to make them the object of the state's violence. This is the wager of the Flores' administration and the wager of ARENA: to obtain a considerable amount of votes through the "successes" that can be achieved through state repression of a sector of society.✚

Wanted:

- ☑ Open Eyes
- ☑ Open Ears
- ☑ Open Heart
- ☑ Open Mind

Do you have what it takes to be a **CRISPAZ** volunteer?

CRISPAZ is looking for volunteers with enthusiasm, dedication, and good conversational Spanish to work in the following areas:

High Risk Youth

Volunteers in the youth area work with urban youth in marginalized neighborhoods and within the penal system. In conjunction with Salvadoran youth organizations, they help create alternatives for young people to develop the skills and abilities that will allow them to choose a positive future.

South North Solidarity

The SNS focus area is looking for a volunteer to help promote links of solidarity between El Salvador and the U.S. Volunteers may help lead delegation trips and research and write news and action alerts about important issues affecting Salvadorans. People with experience in information technology and advanced Spanish are especially encouraged to apply.

Rural Community Accompaniment

RCA volunteers work with rural marginalized communities as they move towards liberation and sustainable ways of living. Volunteers work alongside Salvadoran partner organizations and accompany communities in their journey towards change and just relationships.

CRISPAZ volunteers commit to a minimum of 15-months with their placement community. CRISPAZ works with the volunteer to raise funds and provides a monthly living stipend.

For more information, including placement start dates and applications, please contact one of our offices:
U.S. office: info@crispaz.org
El Salvador office:
cvp-sip@navegante.com.sv
or visit our website:
www.crispaz.org



Update on: Rural Community Accompaniment

Over the past year CRISPAZ has been examining our role within the rural communities where we have worked and continue to work. We have been listening to their current needs and aspirations as we define the kind of support that we can offer in the future through our Rural Community Accompaniment (RCA) focus area. Javier Rivera has been working with CRISPAZ since April to help us in this process of evaluation. Javier, an independent consultant, has been meeting with rural communities, CRISPAZ partner organizations, and current rural community volunteers to hear their experience with CRISPAZ and work with them to construct a new vision of accompaniment. Javier's experience and abilities have been an extremely helpful addition to our RCA area, giving us new perspective on one of the historic areas of CRISPAZ' work.

Since 1989, Javier has accompanied repatriated communities, post-war settlements, and community cooperatives working towards their economic, social, and environmental development. He has worked recently with the Lutheran Church and the Salvadoran Ecological Federation, UNES. His studies include education science and environmental policy.✦

Javier Rivera, CRISPAZ team member in the Rural Community Accompaniment area, working a booth at the Environment Day fair.



Kelly Creodon

Building the road, one stone at a time...

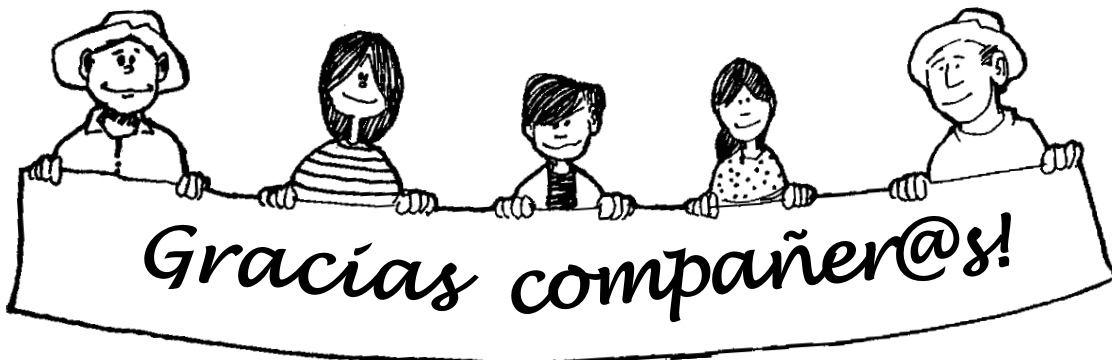
CRISPAZ's work in El Salvador depends on the faithful contributions of many individuals. Every donation allows us to continue our work accompanying the people of El Salvador—work that we've done for nearly 20 years. We're grateful for every gift that we receive and would like to acknowledge some of our recent major donors.

Ren Austing
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Laura and Larry Buffam
Cathy Cornell and Paul Knitter
Richard Dahlke
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Denis and Martha Pierce
Lulu Santana
Sue Severin
Wayne and Lisa Titus
Ruth Walker
Jim and Julia Wallace

Tabor Community
Fordham University Campus Ministry
Dane Street Congregational Church

We offer our thanks to each of these individuals and to the many, many more who have accompanied us in our journey toward peace and justice.

If you would like information about making a gift to CRISPAZ—including gifts of stock—please contact Chris Ney in our U.S. office at 122 DeWitt Drive, Boston MA 02120, 617-445-5115, info@crispaz.org.



CRISPAZ has four focus areas:

- † Economics for People (EPP)
- † Rural Community Accompaniment
- † South North Solidarity (SNS)
- † High-Risk Youth

SALVANET, a project of CRISPAZ, is published four times per year.

Kelly Creedon, Editor

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CRISPAZ relies on your contributions to produce this publication and to continue its accompaniment with the Salvadoran people.

All contributions are tax deductible.

For more information about our programs or to make a contribution, please contact us at:

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SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS UPDATE

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Break out the candles! CRISPAZ is turning 20!

Since 1984, CRISPAZ has been walking with the people of El Salvador. As we reach our 20th anniversary year in 2004, we are excited to celebrate the journey with the thousands of you that have been there alongside us. Please stay tuned for more information as we plan events and activities to commemorate twenty years of accompaniment and look with hope on the road that lies ahead.



If you liked an article that you read in *Salvanet*, we encourage you to share it with others in your publication.

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