

CoFiA Newsletter Spring, 2013



COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS IN ACTION, INC.
P.O. BOX 448, 181 FORT LEE ROAD, LEONIA, NJ 07605
WWW.COMMUNITYOFFRIENDSINACTION.ORG 201-598-2253



Ríos Montt Convicted Of Genocide

José Efraín Ríos Montt

The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) welcomed the verdict in Guatemala by the High Risk Court in the trial of former military dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt. The 86-year-old ex-general was convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity against the indigenous Maya Ixil population during Guatemala's Civil War. He was sentenced to a total of 80 years in prison. José Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez, the co-accused, who headed military intelligence under Ríos Montt, was found innocent.

"Why I Am Here," a video co-produced by Grupo Ella Tu and CoFiA, tells the personal story of one family who were victimized by the genocide.

For more information go to www.communityoffriendsinaction.com

IN MEMORIAM

COFiA and GUD members are sad to share the news of the passing of Angelica Martinez' mother, Julia Gaitan Pineda De Robles, on April 27, 2013, in Hackensack. She had come for a visit and died suddenly from a fall. She was born in Ciudad de Plata, Guatemala, where she was still a resident at the time of her death. She was a retired nurse, having worked at the IGSS Hospital. Many family members from all over the U.S., Guatemala and Canada came to pay their respects, as did members of CoFiA and GUD. Memorial gifts payable to CoFiA may be mailed to: Joan Kramer, 322 Park Ave., Leonia, NJ 07605 to help with funeral expenses.

Rep. Pascrell's staff to speak at Casa Latina on May 20



*Mr. Pascrell,
Democrat,
U.S. Assembly
9th District*

A member of the staff of U.S. Representative William Pascrell will speak at the May 20, 7:00 p.m., meeting of Casa Latina, at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Broad and Homestead Sts, Palisades Park., on immigration policy reform. Participants in Casa Latina will be prepared to ask questions and make suggestions about the proposed legislation. All are welcome. The meeting will be in Spanish. A light supper will be served.

Mr. Pascrell is a Democrat who serves parts of Bergen, Passaic, and Hudson County in the 9th Congressional District.



Leonia Day, May 19, 2013



*Guatemalan wares for sale at
Leonia Day*

CoFiA partici- pates in annual Leonia Day

Every year, members of CoFiA staff a table at the annual Leonia Day celebration in Wood Park in Leonia. This year the table will look festive with Guatemalan fabrics provided by our friends at Grupo Cajola, an organization based in Cajola, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, and Morristown, NJ. Nearly 40 % of the citizens of Cajola have come to the U.S. to earn money so their families can survive. Grupo Cajola has established several businesses, including Maya Mam Weavers, an egg farm, and a furniture-making shop. The goal is to create enough profitable jobs that workers can go home.

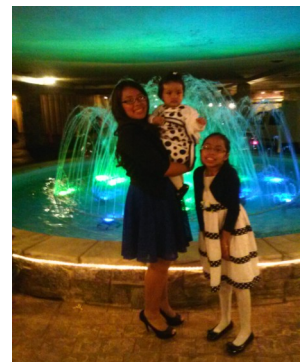
Products for sale at Leonia Day include beautiful table mats, scarves, aprons, and the very popular wrist bands. Stop by the table and stock up for birthday and graduation gifts! For more information go to www.grupocajola.org

We will also have a demonstration of Guatemalan craft by one of our GUD/CoFiA members.

Casa Latina , May 2013

Congratulations to CoFiA "daughter" Elsa Coloma!

Elsa Coloma, daughter of CoFiA vice-chair Roni Coloma, recently had the opportunity to travel to Spain on a school trip. Elsa is an excellent student at Palisades Park High School and plans to go to college in a few years. We have known Elsa and her family for many years and feel that she and her two sisters are part of the CoFiA family!



*Elsa and her little sisters
enjoy a special event*



Amy Gottlieb to speak on May 16 at 7:30 p.m.

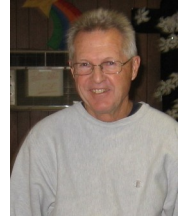
On May 16, the regular monthly meeting of CoFiA will focus on a presentation on immigration reform by Amy Gottlieb, the Director of the AFSC Immigrants Rights Program. The meeting will be held at the Presbyterian Church in Leonia, 181 Fort Lee Road in Leonia.

Amy is the Program Director of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Immigrant Rights Program in Newark. AFSC Immigrant Rights is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the rights of immigrants and refugees through legal services, community organizing, and advocacy. Gottlieb is also an Adjunct Professor of Immigration Law at Rutgers Law School, and a recipient of the ACLU of New Jersey's 2012 Legal Leadership Award and the 2012 Arthur Kinoy Award from the Rutgers Law School chapter of the National Lawyers Guild.

The meeting will give us all the opportunity to better understand the complicated and controversial bill, as well as to hear how groups like AFSC are recommending it should be improved.

The meeting is free and open to the public. For more information go to www.communityoffriendsinaction.org or call 201-833-1737.

Volunteer Recognition Dinner, June 7, 2013, 6:30.



A few of the volunteers and guests at a lunch program on a cold winter day

CoFiA will honor our loyal volunteers at a dinner on June 7, at 6:30 p.m., at the Presbyterian Church in Leonia. Volunteers are the engine that keep the CoFiA lunch program running, serving as many as 60—70 workers during the cold winter months when there are few jobs.

This season our guests were especially grateful because the volunteers were able to provide hot, nutritious meals. Even though there are no reservations and the numbers of diners change from week to week, volunteer coordinators Mary Rausch, Carolyn Sobering, and Pete Shanno report that they never completely ran out of food! Often there is also food left over which the guests are happy to take home. Local bakeries make generous donations of rolls and sweet breads that are a welcome addition.

In addition to honoring our volunteers the evening will feature the presentation of certificates of completion of OSHA training to a number of workers. This training is vital in helping people know how to work safely and what their rights are on the job. Few people realize that ALL workers are protected under U.S. Wage and Hour laws, and are able to file claims if they are hurt on the job.

CoFiA is grateful that staff member Elias Garcia and OSHA trainers Stewart Sydenstricker and Diana Mejia organize this free course for workers in this area. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ridgefield Park, under the leadership of CoFiA member Pastor Janet Blair, has offered space for the training for several years.

We will also be entertained by our own Juan Pablo Morales Estrada and Kim Watson on guitar and vocals. It will be good to see Juan Pablo and Kim again.

The dinner is free and open to the public, but donations of both food and money are welcome! Please call 201-461-6731 to RSVP and let us know what you can bring.

Kim Watson and Juan Pablo Morales Estrada





CoFiA Newsletter Spring 2013

SNAPSHOT OF THE PROPOSED REFORM BILL

As of 2011 there were approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country. There is currently no path to citizenship for this population. This broken system negatively impacts on everyone's wages and working conditions. The fact that workers cannot identify themselves makes them constantly vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous employers, and lowers the wages paid to everyone. It also makes all workers more at risk of being exposed to unsafe working conditions. The legislation currently being proposed would create a path to citizenship. It has many flaws, including a stipulation that extremely expensive measures to secure the borders would have to be taken before the pathway would be opened. The path is also extremely long. Here is a brief outline of a few aspects of the proposed bill.

PATH TO CITIZENSHIP — REGISTERED PROVISIONAL IMMIGRANT

PRELIMINARY REQUIREMENTS

To be allowed to enter this "pathway to citizenship" an applicant must be able to answer "NO" to ALL the following questions:

Have you ever been convicted of a felony, three or more misdemeanors, unlawful voting, or an offense under foreign law?

Does the Department of Homeland Security see you as a potential terrorist?

Are you an agricultural worker? (this is a different pathway)

Did you just move to the US in 2012 or 2013?

Did you live in another country in 2012 or 2013?

REGISTERED PROVISIONAL IMMIGRANT (RPI) STATUS

The current proposal requires that the U.S. borders be completely secured before the rest of the legislation kicks in. Within six months of when the borders are determined to be secure, if you were older than 16 when you entered the US, you can enter the "Standard Path" and apply for RPI status, You must pay a **\$500 FINE**, plus a fee for processing the application. The fastest track to citizenship on this path is **13 years**.

If the application is accepted you will become legal and may work and travel, including international travel. You will also be able to obtain a driving license.

RPI status expires after 6 years. After 6 years you can reapply if you haven't spent more than **60 consecutive days unemployed** or 180 days out of the country, and if you aren't likely to become a **public charge** (eligible for welfare), and your average income has been **higher than the Federal poverty level for all six years**.

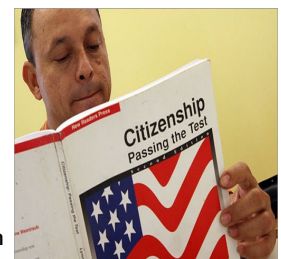
GREEN CARD ELIGIBILITY

After 10 years as an RPI, you may apply for a Legal Permanent Resident Green Card, paying another **\$500 fine**.

If you meet all the requirements above, and your average yearly income is **at least 25% higher** than the poverty line for the entire time you've had RPI status, you can apply for

CITIZENSHIP

three years after you are awarded your green card. The application for citizenship requires an additional **\$1000 fine** and other requirements—pay taxes, know English, and have a clear criminal record.



Community of Friends in Action

Community of Friends in Action, Inc.
P.O. Box 3188
181 Fort Lee Road
Leonia, NJ 07605

201-598-2253
Www.communityoffriendsinaction.org
info@communityoffriendsinaction

The Community of Friends in Action, Inc., is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization based in Bergen County, New Jersey. Members include both migrants and migrant-advocates, working together for better immigration policy and to improve the lives of workers and their families. We provide information about social services, try to help find jobs for eager workers, assist with wage theft recovery, provide opportunities for leadership training and support, and foster positive communication between the workers and the communities in which they live and work.

CoFiA, MIGUA, and G.U.D. participated in recent rallies for immigration reform

We're on the web! And Facebook!
www.communityoffriendsinaction.org



Proposed Reform Bill (continued from p. 3)

Some benefits of the proposed legislation

Eliminate all current backlogs by 9 years after enactment

Some improvement in family reunification

Some improvements in the detention system

RPI holders may work legally **immediately on application** with guarantees of all applicable labor laws, fair wages, and portability of jobs

Some drawbacks

Politically-motivated punitive language ("fines") and excessive costs

Unrealistic expectations of permanency of jobs and level of wages

Unreasonable length of time between application and citizenship

Unrealistic emphasis on border closures and high costs of monitoring the borders, (fences, radar, drones, more agents, more detention, etc.)

Donations and Members Welcome!

We know that not everyone has the time or energy to work actively with our organization. So we encourage anyone who wants to support our work to provide financial contributions.

Checks payable to CoFiA may be mailed to: CoFiA, P.O. Box 448, 181 Fort Lee Road, Teaneck, NJ 07666

We also welcome new members to assist in all our activities: the lunch program on Mondays; wage theft collection; coat drives; workers link program; medical and social services for workers; community outreach and education; publicity and public relations.

And more! Just contact us at 201-598-2253 or info@communityoffriendsinaction.org. Membership fees are voluntary but a \$5 donation is customary.

Your editor is looking for someone to help with design and layout of our newsletter. Please contact Margaret White, 201-833-1737, marbwhite@aol.com. And thanks!

