

LELO

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LELO's Annual
Domingo, Viernes, Jefferson
Awards Dinner
JUNE 10

Thank You Cherry Cayabyab!

by scott winn



"Being a part of the Family Wage Jobs Committee was my favorite memory of working at LELO," reflected Cherry Cayabyab about her year working as organizer of LELO's Family Wage Job Organizing Project. Cherry is now working as the Coordinator of the University of Washington Women's Center. "I had the opportunity to meet and work with an amazing group of working class folks who have more heart and drive than many of the people who get the credit for being community activists. It was humbling

Association, the group founded and led by Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes before they were assassinated in 1981.

Cherry returned from vacation and started her job at the UW Women's Center, and was happy to see Paula Lukaszek, a member of the Family Wage Jobs Project. Paula is a unionized plumber at the UW. "I was so excited to see Paula!" remembers Cherry. "We gave each other big hugs and I felt nostalgic."

Cherry's community work continues. She volunteers as the Education Director for Gabriela Network, a Filipina solidarity organization. She is also on the Board of the Asian Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center, and the Seattle Chapter of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. She plans to stay involved with LELO as well.

"LELO is on point with its political analysis." continued Cherry. "LELO doesn't just represent communities of color, LELO is communities of color. LELO is workers organizing for themselves, the reality of that at LELO will always echo within me. It is how I strive to see myself doing social justice organizing as a lifestyle. A holistic and comprehensive analysis, including an international perspective, without being afraid to say they are anti-capitalist. While LELO provides a larger political framework for folks, it maintains a diverse way of thinking and seeing the world. LELO builds unity that way."

to be part of the committee, as well as working with everyone at LELO."

LELO seems to follow Cherry everywhere she goes now. After leaving LELO, before she found new employment, her mother took her to Hawaii for a vacation. Cherry was taking a ride back to her hotel and struck up a conversation with her driver. Ends up he used to be a cannery worker at Alaska's Wards Cove, where the famous Supreme Court Wards Cove Cannery Workers Civil Rights lawsuit sprang from, a major project of LELO in the 1980's and 1990's. He was also a member of the Alaskan Cannery Workers

FOR WORKERS. BY WORKERS

SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES, **TO EACH OTHER**

A Newsletter of LELO – A Legacy of Equality, Leadership & Organizing

ISSUE 12: SPRING 2006

A Face to the Struggle for Immigrant Rights: Jorge Quiroga

by Karen Zammit



Like many of you, I saw Jorge Quiroga at LELO events and was not aware of his story. We recently talked about his experience being a political refugee from Argentina and how he became an organizer for immigrant and worker rights. He is currently on the boards of El Comité Pro Amnistia General y Justicia Social (*The Committee for General Amnesty & Social Justice*) and LELO.

"I came from Argentina, where I was a young organizer involved in community and union organizing. My uncle was active in the resistance movement in Argentina in the 50's, when they broke down the

dictatorships. He made me participate at a very young age. I used to be a carpenter, but the Argentinean government took me as being linked with an organization called Monteneros, which was one of the biggest groups in Argentina that was fighting against dictators. I was doing political work for them, but the government believed I was a guerilla fighter," shares Jorge, recounting his time in Argentina. "I was coming from work on a motorcycle and it broke down, and I was trying to fix it. The army came on one of those flatbed trucks, and I didn't see them but heard them, and everyone jumped on me. I woke up under the feet of all the soldiers because they laid me down in the back of the truck. I had a black bag over my face. I was detained for 3½ years and tortured, but they never had proof. My family thought I was dead."

"When I came from Argentina, I worked hard for many years to make my family successful," says Jorge,

(Continued on page 2)

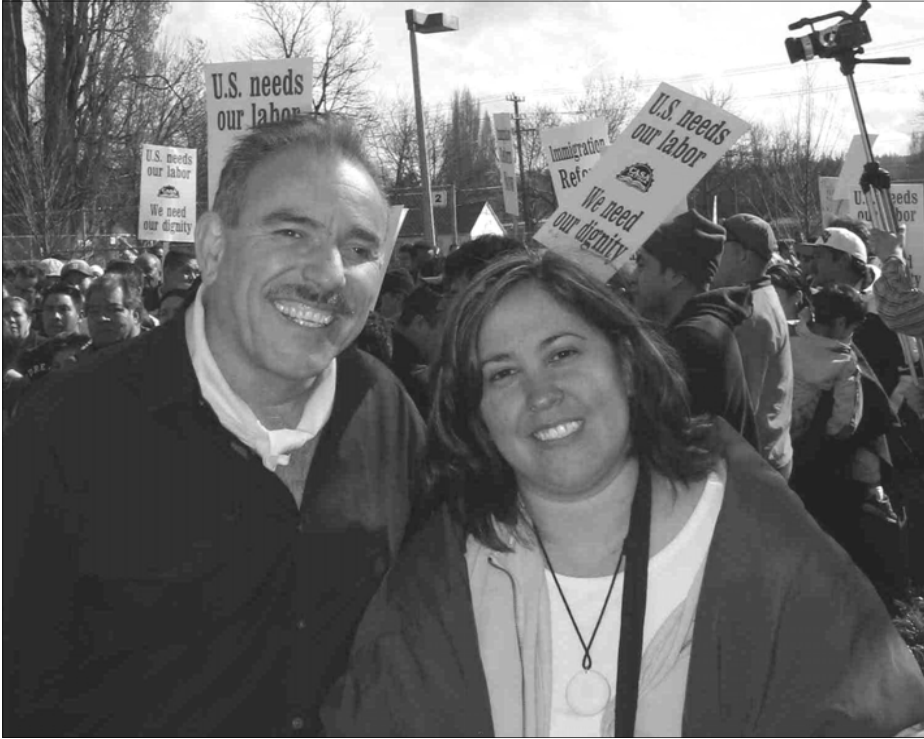
The April 10th May 1st, *La Marchas* brought millions of undocumented Latino families, other immigrants and their allies into the streets in cities and small towns across the country to demand basic human rights. LELO founder Silme Domingo liked to talk about the "ebbs and flows" of people's movements. He reminded us that our work, as social justice organizers, is to build strong political and organizational skills so that our folks would be educated, empowered and ready to lead when the flow came. In 1999, organizer Ricardo Ortega, on behalf of LELO, helped found *El Comité Pro Amnistia General y Justicia Social* – The Committee for General Amnesty & Social Justice. For the past seven years the *Comité* has worked tirelessly to conduct outreach and education in undocumented Latino communities across the state. Now that the flow is upon us, with literally tens of thousands mobilizing in Seattle alone, the *Comité* is at the forefront of both the local and national immigrant rights movements. LELO are proud to be a founding partner of the *Comité* and a participant in this historic moment.

La Lucha Continua!

—The Editors



(Continued from page 1)



Jorge Quiroga (L) & Araceli Hernandez, Comité Board members, at the March 18th immigrant rights rally.

whose family in Argentina eventually obtained a visa for him to get out of jail and come to Seattle. St. Paul’s church in Rainier Beach sponsored him. "20,000 people were killed in Argentina during that period, so I do not consider my story unique. The only uniqueness is that I am alive. History has been written by the people who win; the other side of the story usually is never told.”

Jorge stepped back into community organizing six years ago after leading a church campaign to hold Spanish masses and then became involved with The Comité. “The Comité formed about 7 years ago, it sprouted from LELO and the NW Immigrant Rights Project in partnership with the carpenters and painters unions as well as other organizations and individual members. Our main work has been to organize grassroots community groups. We share information with the community about immigrant rights and the importance of fair immigration legislation reform. We tell the communities that it’s not true that because they are undocumented that they don’t have rights, they do have rights...labor rights, civil rights, and

human rights. The Comité has never tried to be the voice of the community, but believes that people can express themselves instead of us interpreting. That’s why we believe that putting people on the street is making sure that people hear what the community wants.”

National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice

The Comité organized, with a broad coalition, the historic march of over 30,000 people, mostly Latinos, from the Central Area to the Federal Building in Seattle on April 10, 2006. During our conversation, Jorge was still excited about the public support and turnout. “I was on Rainier Avenue just before the march, and a lady came to me with a flyer to go to the march. She picked up a flyer at El Centro De La Raza and made her own copies and her family was out leafleting. I started to feel that it was going to be huge. When people asked me how many people would be at this march, I would say between 10 to 20 thousand, and they thought I was crazy. And there was way more than that!”

“They just didn’t like the bill that has passed through the House which

makes simply being an undocumented person a felony in this country. It allows the police in any state to detain immigrants. That galvanized the community," says Jorge, explaining why the march was such a success. "For the immigrants there will be a different set of rules. For example, we can be detained differently...we can be immediately deported without a day in court. They say within 100 miles from a point of entry you could be considered a person who just crossed the border and they can immediately deport you. In Seattle, we have no place to go without risking deportation because every place is within 100 miles of a point of entry. I think that has turned the corner for us to make this a massive issue. We cannot allow this to go through; if this goes through, we lose. ‘Illegal immigrant’ is not a term that we like very much, because if you put it that way it is easier to put harsh laws against them because they are ‘illegal’ instead of ‘undocumented’," continued Jorge. "What we are trying to do is pass legislation within Congress to legalize people who are already here in the country, which is probably 11 to 12 million people today. I believe that now is the time for the civil rights organizing and fights for Latinos just like the 1960’s were for the African Americans.”

“Today we have superfluous divisions between races because economic forces keep us separated. That serves the purpose of keeping us fighting for the crumbs from the table," comments Jorge, sharing his hopes for the future of the immigrant rights movement. "The only way we can participate at the table is if we unite as people of color. All groups share the same struggle for human rights, labor and civil rights. Groups of people can grow politically together to amplify opportunity for political discussion and action.”

Karen Zammit is a working single mom, recovering student, and activist. Participating on the newsletter committee enables her to demonstrate continued support of LELO’s human rights campaigns.

Agua Verde Restaurant, American Civil Liberties Union, American Friends Service Committee, Asian Counseling and Referral Service, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, Benson East Tenants, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Black Dollar Days, Boston Foundation - Circle Fund, The Breakfast Club, Café Flora, Carpenters' Union, Local 131, Cascade People's Center, CASA Latina, Central Area Development Association, Center for Career Alternatives, Church Council of Greater Seattle, Community Coalition for Environmental Justice, Department of Neighborhoods, Drachler & McKee, LLP, Emerald City Jazz, Evergreen State College Labor Education, McDermott, G.S.B.A., Harry Bridges Labor Center for Labor Studies, Hate Free Zone, High Note Espresso, IBEW Local 46, IBU/ILWU Region 37, IFPTE, Local 17, Interim Community Development Association, Japanese American Citizens League, Jubilee NW, Kiewit Pacific Co., King County Charitable Giving Campaign, King County Division of Community Corrections, Larry Phillips for County Council, Low Income Housing Institute, MacDonald, Hoague & Bayless, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marriage Equality Now, Marpac Construction, Microsoft Matching Gifts Program, Minority Executive Directors Coalition, Mothers for Police Accountability, Nonprofit Assistance Center, October 22 Coalition, OPEIU Local 8, Out Front Labor Coalition/Pride at Work, Palestine Solidarity Committee, People for Richard Conlin, People with Nick Licata, Porter's Refrigeration, Public Interest Law Group, Quicksources, Inc., Rainier Valley Development Fund, Real Change, SAFECO Insurance Co, SCIDPDA, Seattle Community Access Network, Seattle Office for Civil Rights, SEIU, Local 6, SEIU, Local 925, SEIU, Local 1199, Seattle-King County Building & Construction Trades Council, Seattle Young People's Project, SHARE/WHEEL, Social Justice Fund Northwest, Sound Transit, South Seattle Community College Foundation, Spectra Communications, Stritmatter Kessler Whelan Withey Coluccio, Teamsters Local 174, Tenants Union, Tides Foundation, Community Investments Fund, Tiempo, Tierra Learning Center, United Way of King County, University Baptist Church, Urban Press, WA State Building & Construction Trades Council, Washington Cement Masons Training Institute, Washington State Jobs With Justice, Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition, Western States Center, Women in Black, David Abrams, Chick Ackley, Duboise Adams, Phillip Adams, Joanne Alcantara, Negin Almassi, Xochitl Alvarez-Ponce, Brenda Anibarro, Ronald Antonio, Connie Ashbrook, Maia & Guy Astley, Marc Auerbach, Denise Baeza, Susan Bagby, Sean Bagsby, Melissa Bailey, Michael Baker & Judy Tobin, Bob Barnes & Sue Gibbs, Mike Barnett & Abby Howell, Maria Batayola, Teresita Batayola & Dionnie Dionisio, Geoff Bate, Marcia Benjamin, Paul Benz & Linda Olsen, Charles Bergquist, Samson Beriso, James Bible, Ismahan Bihi, Mindy & Paul Blaski, Maureen Bo, Ronald Bolisay, Beata Bowen, Andrea Brenneke & Dan Clarkson, Jennifer Brower, Kamillah Brown, Angela Burks, Wayne Burnette, Richard Burton, Miguel Cardoso de Campos and Dawn Aiken, Greg Carey, Delbert Castle, Emma Catague, Goldie Caughlan, Cherry Cayabyab, Robin Chapman, Abeslin Chavez, Marissa Chavez, Louise Chernin, Dean Chier, Doug Chin, Stephanie Christman, Thomas & Zofia Churchill, Darryl & Gina Coaxum, Fai Coffin, Cindy Cole, Jean Colman, King County Councilmember Dow Constantine, Clint Coppernoll, Merrill Cousin, Maggie Crain, Jo Cripps, Cesar Cueva, Sabra Dahir, Charles & Jonis Davis, Heather Day, Andrea De Majewski, Eric Dee, Donnalyln Denina, Rochelle Derrough, Patricia Deutsch, Ulric Dihle, Daniel DiLeva, Vanny Doeun, Adelina Domingo, Cindy Domingo, Kalayaan Domingo, Lynn Domingo, Nemesio Domingo, John Donaghy, Barbara Dorris, Jim Douglas & Sasha Harmon, Donna Duffy, Carol Dwyer, Arthur Dye, Wendie Dyson, Scrooge Ebby, King County Council Member Carolyn Edmonds, Stephanie Erickess-Caluya, Monst'R Esguerra & Boo Torres de Esguerra, Gary Fasso, Ellen Ferguson, Osvaldo Fernandez & Sonya Flores, Naomi Finkelstein, Curt Firestone, Sonia Flores, Jim Flynn, Judith Fortier, Michael & Sally Fox, John Foz & Elaine Ko, Terry & Diann French, Atilio & Luisa Gallardo, Gholamabaas Ghojiei, Eric Gilbreath, Angela Gilliam, Courtney Gomez, Sally Goodwin, Natasha Gordon, King County Council Member Larry Gossett, Larry & Rhonda Gossett, Mike Graham-Squire, Thomas Granger, Cyrus Gray, Gary Greaves, Jennifer Greenstein, James Gregory, Trevor Griffey, Rich Gurtiza, Peter Guzman, Lee Halpri, George Hampton, Joe Doyle Hankins, State Representative Bob Hasegawa, Todd & Carolyn Hawkins, Araceli Hernandez, Amy Herzfeld, Pat & Elizabeth Higgins, Gregg Hirakawa, Thomas Hodges, R Corbin Houchins, Juli Hughes, Erin Hyppa, Adrienne Ines, King County Councilmember David Irons, Charlene & Bud Ishida, Alice Ito & Bob Shimabukuro, Davis Ja & Deborah Sherwood, Daniel Jacoby, Faduma Jama, E. 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LELO's MISSION

LELO is a 30+ year-old workers' rights organization based in Seattle, Washington with a Legacy of Equality, Leadership & Organizing. LELO strives to empower workers of color, low income and women workers to assert our rights, improve our working conditions and gain a voice in our workplaces, trade unions and communities - both within the US and across the globe.

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Beata Bowen, Eric Dee (Cover Photos),
Jorge Quiroga, Laura Soracco

Thank you to www.niniart.org for the social justice graphics.

(Continued from page 5)

Payday loans or cash advance loans are “designed to keep borrowers in debt, not provide one-time assistance” according to the Center for Responsible Lending. In 2003 they found, “borrowers who receive 5 or more loans a year account for 91% of the lender’s business.”

As a result of these debts, many end up with bad credit scores which limit the ability to pass credit checks when looking for an apartment to rent or applying for a car loan. Moreover, it is now becoming commonplace for employers to use pre-employment credit checks when making hiring decisions, even for entry-level jobs.

Bringing Our Research Home

LELO kicked the New Year off with the goal of investigating the connections between debt and poverty in the Rainier Valley. On a cloudy February day in Seattle, LELO members pair up in teams of two and three and walk the Rainier Avenue/Martin Luther King Jr. corridor, stretching from Genesee to Alaska street. The members, who are also neighborhood residents, had their clipboards in hand, taking to the streets as researchers. They mapped the locations of lending businesses that are quickly becoming a feature of the Rainier Valley. The community mapping project marks the first phase of the campaign by examining the economic, racial and social factors that lead to debt in our communities. For the mapping project, LELO Debt & Poverty organizer, Lynn Domingo formed a committee by recruiting six community members from the southeast Rainier neighborhood to research and document the high concentration of rip-off businesses on Rainier Avenue and Martin Luther King Way. The committee is developing leadership by using co-chairs and collectively deciding on what equipment, software, training and other items should be purchased with the grant money that was awarded to run the project mapping and video taping. They collected data and created a spreadsheet to document the name of the business, its location and the services it provides. “It was a participatory activity, where active members in their community get out, talk to other workers and account for businesses in their neighborhood,” remarked Lynn as she pointed to the stack of forms completed by the members.

Lynn is energized about the project and her commitment to making the research participatory is evident as she talks about an upcoming research session for the committee. Following a training, members will search the internet for data that reflects their everyday life experiences. The data collected by LELO’s community activists will be given to Beacon Hill resident and cartographer Wayne Rennick of the Pacific Groundwater Group. Rennick will create a multi-layered map using Geographic Information System software that allows demographic information to be overlaid with spatial information. The map will serve as a visual document of how debt and poverty are connected in the Columbia City neighborhood. The Debt & Poverty committee will present its findings as part of a community forum on gentrification sponsored by the Department of Neighborhoods in June.

Using Video to Speak for Ourselves

Coupled with the community mapping project is a video documentary that gives LELO members the opportunity to tell, in their own words, how they and their families are impacted by the economic pressures facing working class families today. The video will be aired on local cable access television stations to educate and encourage community dialogue on the issue.

Forging the Road Out of Poverty

Today, the foot trail that once connected the Salish people from Lake Washington to Elliott Bay carries buses and cars of workers who clean high rises, own businesses and fill thousands of jobs throughout Seattle. Over time, the old foot trail has heard stories at its bus stops, listened to the giggles of children along its sidewalks and felt the footsteps of grandmothers walking to the local grocery stores. How long the low-income residents of this community will continue calling the neighborhood home requires that we investigate the issue of debt related to poverty. LELO is committed to working on this issue and hopeful that we can build strong communities where everyone’s voice is heard and potential realized. Ultimately, LELO intends to show the connection between how low credit scores deny people their basic human rights of housing, employment, and adequate transportation.

Come to the SE Seattle Gentrification Forum on June 17!
For more info contact Lynn Domingo at (206) 860-1400 or lynn@lelo.org

Brenda Anibarro is a community researcher and a member of the LELO Newsletter Committee.

Immigrant Rights Movement Benefits All Workers

by Frederick Simmons

I look up Jackson Street and witness a sea of people descending toward downtown Seattle. This is the largest protest march since the WTO. But what am I really seeing? Initially I thought the size of these coordinated national marches was spontaneous; but now I realize movements are developed through years of sacrifice, hard work and patience. The marches have generated huge debates within our economic system, within other communities of color, and within Congress. Immigration is what it has always been: the perception of a better life elsewhere.

I hear people say that the pilgrims were the first immigrants. This is not true. Let us not confuse immigration with colonialism. To colonize is to subjugate an indigenous people. Immigration is an outgrowth of colonization. When the colonized can no longer survive because their land and resources have been plundered, when workers can no longer provide for their families, they are forced to leave behind their countries, cultures and traditions to survive.

The economic debate centers around the false premise that immigration is a financial drain on the economy. If every undocumented worker stopped working for a week our economy would collapse. Another argument is that immigration drives down other workers’ wages. That if the jobs done by recent immigrants and undocumented workers paid more, American workers would want them. Making this argument assumes that recent immigrants have control over our economic system. That they are in control of market forces. That they are the ones making the decisions to outsource, layoff, move factories, and destruct workers’ movements. This just isn’t true. The real drain on our economy comes when the rest of the working class sits idly by and allows any worker to

be exploited simply because they lack documentation, or their country of origin is not the United States.

Another argument I hear constantly is that immigrants are taking jobs from Black workers. When conservatives make this argument it is tantamount to saying that your skin color relegates you to certain job choice and pay scales. That Black and Brown workers will naturally be pitted against each other in a race to the bottom. What disturbs me the most is that I hear this argument from Black workers. It’s time that Black and Brown workers got together to stop our mutual exploitation. It’s time we started talking about solidarity instead of competition.

Conservatives, politicians and market forces are trying to use the immigration issue to divide workers along racial and economic lines. Racism and xenophobia have always been used as a tool to disunite workers’ struggles. Xenophobia has given rise to vigilante groups like the “Minute-Men” (a group started in Arizona to try to stop border crossings) and serious talk about the construction of a 2,000 mile “Berlin” type wall between the U.S.

and Mexico. (I guess the Canadian border isn’t an issue.) Legislation was introduced in Congress to criminalize facilitating or helping human beings with basic human needs, simply because of their undocumented status. Meanwhile there is no punishment for the biggest beneficiaries of their labor.

LELO has an analysis that has been with this organization for 35 years: no worker is “illegal” and workers should have the same rights as capital. If capital (or corporations) can move freely across borders then workers should be able to move freely also. Our organization is grounded in the concept of “No Separate Peace.” This means that all workers’ struggles worldwide are interconnected and if a group of anywhere in the world is disenfranchised then our work must continue. It also means that whenever a group of workers wins changes in their conditions, we all benefit. If the current immigrant rights movement is successful, all workers should thank them.

Until Next Time,
Frederick Simmons,
LELO Board Member
below Center



LELO Builds A Stronger Movement

“LELO’s history is based on real peoples’ experiences,” said Garry Owens, LELO Board member. “Our popular education process is grounded in a viewpoint that we – people of color, workers, women – need to be able to see the relevance of our lives in the context of history.” Popular political education is a key tool in LELO’s base-building toolbox.

campaign planning, political analysis and networking. After undergoing a major reorganization last spring, LELO has taken steps to implement base-building strategies aimed at creating a stronger grassroots membership rooted in working class communities of color. As a means to clarify and strengthen its base-building plan, LELO recently joined Western States Center’s new Base-Building Cluster.

The Western States Center’s¹ Base-Building Cluster is comprised of

by Tiffani Koyano and Kristyn Joy

several areas of base-building recruitment strategies, identifying potential leaders, framing issues, campaign work, and relationship-building across community lines, the organizations were also able to look at each other’s practices and exchange effective skills and ideas.

“The purpose of the cluster is to bring together organizations of color so we can grow and learn from each others’ weaknesses and strengths,” said Wanda Saunders, LELO member. “I learned that in addition to breadth, or numbers, we also need to develop depth in our membership.”

For four Saturdays in April, LELO members gathered to participate in the “Orange Crane Popular Political Education Series.” The series’ name is a tribute to LELO founder, Tyree Scott, who worked for 20 years maintaining and repairing the shipping cranes at the Port of Seattle. The Orange Crane series is just one “base-building” strategy launched by LELO to deepen a political relationship with its members.

“We want our new members to have confidence in their analysis,” said Frederick Simmons, a member of LELO’s Board and its Popular Education Team. “I tell them that ‘history is not complete until your story is told.’ Political education allows working class people to think critically about our own situations. If we can do that, we can build a strong movement.”

Tiffani Koyano is a member of the LELO Newsletter Committee, yoga teacher, and college program coordinator.

Kristyn Joy is the Education & Membership Coordinator at LELO.

¹ Western States Center are composed of staff, trainers & consultants whose mission is to build a progressive movement for social, economic, racial & environmental justice in the Western states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada & Alaska.

Hurricane Katrina

by Beata Bowen

RELIEF UPDATE

Months after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, the city is still struggling. Katrina killed more than 1,500 people and displaced nearly 300,000 of the city’s poorest inhabitants. At this time underneath the rubble there are still 987 people unaccounted for and bodies are still being uncovered. According to Common Ground, a grassroots relief organization stationed in the heart of the destruction, 17 bodies of hurricane victims were uncovered in the past month and a half alone. New Orleans has not yet recovered. While the national relief funds can’t find their way to the streets of the Ninth Ward, Gentilly and New Orleans East (the poorest of the city’s neighborhoods), the people on the ground have taken matters into their own hands. Organizations such as Common Ground, People’s Relief Fund, Community Labor United and Momma D in the Ninth Ward, have been actively rebuilding their communities.



Through the Puget Sound Katrina Relief and Reconstruction Committee, LELO has been organizing help for New Orleans since day one. Significant help came when a Teamsters’ Union member (and Committee member) observed usable building materials, tools and equipment, making its way to our landfills through the King County Solid Waste transfer station. The Committee, seeing an opportunity to use what was being thrown away, approached King County Executive Ron Sims for help. Sims saw this as an opportunity not only for the Committee trying to help the

people of New Orleans, but also an opportunity for the businesses that were throwing usable materials away. He and members of his staff drafted a letter to 400 businesses in the Seattle/King County area offering them fair market value tax relief for their donations. The program was a success. The Committee has been able to completely fill three 40 foot containers and are now in the process of filling up the fourth. The containers have been filled with table saws, tools, generators, windows, bathtubs, plumbing fixtures, various building materials including pallets of sheetrock, as well as a nine passenger van and a used Honda Accord. In addition to material donations, the Committee was able to purchase a \$2,500 Lowes gift card to be shared among the above mentioned New Orleans grassroots relief organizations. A number of volunteers went to New Orleans during Spring Break to deliver the donations and to help in rebuilding.

The fight to rebuild New Orleans isn’t over yet. There has been increased interest in the Committee and thanks to the efforts of our community, the list of endorsers continues to grow.

Beata Bowen was born and raised in Poland and has been living in Seattle since 1995. She went to Cuba with LELO’s EveryWoman’s delegation in 2003.



Latoya Rivera at Seattle’s MLK Day March, calling for Iraq war funds to be allocated to rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina.



L to R: Jorge Quiroga, Caron Berrysmith, Moon Vazquez, Fai Mathews, and Frank Reynolds enjoy a laugh during the Orange Crane Popular Political Education Series.

The term “base building” can be described as the strategies that a social justice group uses to ensure that the “real people” they represent are truly engaged, active and leading their work. In LELO’s case, our “base” is working class and poor people of color and women.

A good base-building plan enables organizations to develop well-rounded leaders who can apply their skills in today’s society and train the new leaders of tomorrow. Some of these skills include outreach, effective public speaking,

anchor organizations whose goal is to “develop skills and capacities that result in a larger and deeper base of support for social justice organizing in communities of color.” In November 2005, six organizations from Washington and Oregon met to initiate the project and launch a variety of joint activities. Joining LELO were the Seattle Young People’s Project, the Community Coalition for Environmental Justice, Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality, VOZ Hispana and Latinos Unidos Siempre. After being trained in

Delegation to Mexico Fights Privatization

by Laura Soracco



People's movements around the world oppose privatization.

“Privatization” is a new term for many of us. However, we may be familiar with an example of what happens when our jobs, public assets, or public services are handed over to a private company. Take the people of New Holly, a low-income community in Southeast Seattle managed by the Seattle Housing Authority. A few years ago New Holly residents started receiving excessively high water bills after a Texas collection agency took over the billing. “99% of these families were very low income, didn’t have cars to wash and lawns to mow, yet their water bills equaled those of people with homes in Beacon Hill,” said Abdu Rahman Jama, an organizer in Seattle’s Somali community. “People didn’t know anything about privatization before this issue. Yet when they found out that the reason they were paying more was because of a private company, they felt cheated.”

Dawna Bell, a former Port of

Seattle employee, lost her family wage job in January 2002 when the Port signed a 30-year lease with Steve Doring Services of America, a multinational corporation now in charge of the crane maintenance. “Those were public assets. But the (Port of Seattle) Commission just got together and wrote it off,” said Bell.

These cranes were purchased with our tax dollars and their maintenance used to be under public control. Now that the private sector controls our former public assets, the standards for hiring and workers’ safety are lowered. Four years later, Bell is still struggling to recuperate from the loss of her Port job, “It affected my whole livelihood and took a big toll... It had a financial and emotional impact on my family.”

This fall, LELO’s Tyree Scott International Worker to Worker Project will send a local delegation to Mexico to meet with workers and community organizers who have faced and defeated

privatization. It will be an opportunity for folks like Dawna Bell and Abdu Rahman Jama to strategize with their Mexican counterparts about how workers and communities can fight to protect public assets. The delegation is specifically recruiting the following participants: workers who have been affected by privatization, low-income community members, students and immigrants. Upon their return, delegates will design and lead local education and organizing efforts to better protect our public assets and services and help us stop this trend of privatization.

Delegates will get the opportunity to meet with a wide range of groups in and around Mexico City over the course of a week. “They may be surprised by the huge size of some of these organizations, such as El Frente Popular de Francisco Villa (The Francisco Villa Popular Front),” said LELO Organizer Ricardo Ortega. “Their 50,000 members occupy vacant lots in Mexico City and force the government to turn over ownership to the “Frente” to provide housing and start community-owned businesses. It’s the reverse of privatization. We have a lot to learn from our Mexican brothers and sisters.”

For more information about participating in or supporting LELO’s Delegation to Mexico Against Privatization, call Organizer Joyce Yee at (206) 860-1400 x3 or email her at joyce@lelo.org.

Laura Adele Soracco is a member of the Tyree Scott International Worker to Worker Committee.

Mapping the Link Between Debt and Poverty

by Brenda Anibarro

Over 100 years ago, Rainier Avenue, the busy thoroughfare that runs through the heart of Columbia City from South Jackson Street to Renton, was part of a foot trail walked by the Salish people. The trail provided a route between the shores of Lake Washington and Elliott Bay. Today, what once was a foot trail is now a bustling road surrounded by one of Seattle’s most ethnically diverse and working class neighborhoods.

The first wave of change to Rainier Valley came with colonization of the city by white settlers. Later, Italian immigrants came to the valley in search of work in the coal mines. The area witnessed the loss of its Japanese American community during the forced internment of World War II and the arrival of African Americans who were pushed out of the Central District by racist housing covenants following the War. In the last 30 years, growing Latino, Asian and African immigrant communities have made a home here. Yet many residents are struggling to continue calling the neighborhood home due to rising housing costs coupled with low-wages and a flood of debts from the high cost of medical care, bank loans and other expenses. As in many low-income communities across the country, lending and check cashing businesses offering short-term, high-interest rate loans are popping up all over the neighborhood. With little or no other alternatives to provide for themselves and their families, many people are turning to these businesses for immediate financial



L: Latoya Rivera, Co-Chairs of the Debt & Poverty Campaign Center R: Lynn Domingo, Community Organizer

support and incurring exorbitant fees and interest rates which compound their debt and create a vicious cycle of poverty. A number of factors play a role in creating the patterns of debt that is occurring in our communities:

Low wages

The service sector, typically underpaid jobs (child care workers, security guards, cashiers, etc) is one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. labor force.

Discrimination

Access to livable wage jobs including healthcare and retirement benefits are often denied to people of color and low-income women because of unfair hiring practices or policies.

High costs of medical care

In Washington State more than 800,000 residents do not have health insurance, according to the Economic Opportunity

Institute. In 2004, 27 million workers were uninsured because not all companies offer health benefits. Not all workers qualify for coverage and many employees can’t afford their share of the health insurance premium even when coverage is at their fingertips, reports the National Coalition on Health Care.

Privatization of debt collection

Private collection agencies that use higher interest rates are taking over the servicing of public debts incurred by student loans, traffic tickets and court fees.

Predatory Lending

\$25 billion a year is taken from low-income consumers to pay for predatory mortgages, payday loans, and other lending abuses like overdraft loans, excessive credit card debt, and tax refund loans cites the Center for Responsible Lending.

(Continued on page 10)

LELO Women's Leadership Project



Following our Strategic Planning Retreat in November 2005, women at LELO began meeting to lay the groundwork for a new project to promote and develop the leadership of working class women of color. LELO's EveryWoman's Delegations to Cuba (1999-2003) first opened up a dedicated space for women to organize together. This project continues that process. Staff organizer Kristyn Joy asked a handful of LELO women, "What are your hopes and dreams for our new Women's Leadership and Organizing Project?" Here are their words...

"I see this project institutionalizing leadership development for women at LELO and further developing our organizing process. We want our women to be given opportunities for growth: to lead political education sessions, not just be a part of them. To lead or chair a committee. To join the board... I also hope we can have a space for women to share their stories and support each other around, for example, workplace struggles. First we would help women develop advocacy skills, and then later the organizing and political education pieces. And LELO would begin addressing issues that are particularly pertinent to women – because of course we already bring them here."

Joyce Yee, LELO Member



Fai Mathews, LELO Member

"I want the women to be able to play a stronger role in LELO and gain more recognition for the work that we do. Women can bring about some change as far as the different actions that LELO might take and the issues we work on. I think we'll be working harder towards goals that are family oriented. We will frame the issues differently. The Family Wage Jobs Project, for instance. We know that when you're making \$20/hour versus \$7-10/hour, not just the worker but the whole family benefits."

(Pictured center left)



Sylvia Sabon, LELO Member

"If other women could see more sisters getting it together, we could become a role model for them. They would say, 'The way they are organized, they inspire me.' And then they would want to join LELO. I'd also like to build more confidence in myself to be able to talk with other women about getting involved. We have a lot of issues to work on together, like jobs. When women get pregnant they often are afraid to take time off. So they only take six weeks and you need more time than that. It's a struggle to have a family and keep your job. It shouldn't be like that."

Monst*R Esguerra, LELO Board Member

"Throughout history we have had such a hard time integrating the rights for different oppressed groups – people of color, women, poor people, queer folks, etc. A criticism of many past movements – the suffragist movement, civil rights movement, etc. – was that women of color weren't able to fully identify or have full access to leadership, because of the focus on either race or gender, but not both. Half of our selves have been ignored! I want to see LELO become a stronger example of how to address these issues simultaneously, in a way that organizations and movements haven't been able to do in the past."