

During NISGUA's 2010 tour, **Pascual Bernabe Velasquez**, a representative of the **Assembly of Huehuetenango for the Defense of Natural Resources**, participated in over **50 activities** with grassroots organizations, indigenous leaders, community centers, social justice groups, day laborers, immigrant groups, and university audiences. We visited **19 cities, towns and tribal lands** from New Mexico and Arizona in the Southwest, up through California to Portland and Seattle in the Northwest. And our "daily bread," as Pascual said, "was mining, indigenous peoples and human rights." We share with you reflections from NISGUA staff member Bridget Brehen, who accompanied the tour.

Visit our blog for photos: nigua.blogspot.com.



Pascual and Luis Gonzalez from the National Coalition against Metallic Mining of El Salvador

I wish I could fully capture what it felt like to experience firsthand the power of Pascual and the Assembly's message, the incredible hospitality we received and the range of audiences we were able to reach during this tour. I was **inspired by the level of consciousness that has developed in the US**, with participants who intuitively understood how mining and indigenous rights issues in Guatemala **connect to larger global issues** such as free trade and climate justice, as well as local issues of immigration or resource extraction on indigenous lands within the United States. I was moved by the **solidarity and spirit** generated at events with impacted communities, such as meetings with indigenous leaders in Arizona and New Mexico or a community event with grassroots member organization POWER (People Organizing to Win Economic Rights) in San Francisco. Throughout the tour, long-term NISGUA activists and new connections alike showed me the **power of lifelong activism** and ties of solidarity.

TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZING

During the tour, we were pleased to connect with communities impacted by natural resource extraction throughout the Americas. In Tucson we met with students visiting Tierra y Libertad Organization (TYLO), all leaders from their communities and the first with the opportunity to attend university. Youth leaders from Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru passionately discussed mining, indigenous rights and autonomy with Pascual. The group shared opinions and strategies on how to defend community lands, each drawing from the experience of his or her home country.

RADIO INTERVIEW: Native American Calling

--"There is a prophecy mentioning that the eagle from the north and the condor from the south [are] gonna meet one day, specifically [referencing] the unification of all indigenous cultures...maybe this is part of that...to unify the north and the south together." -- Call-in listener from Hopi Nation in Arizona

--"We also have this belief as Mayas...we know that in 2012 there will be a change favorable to indigenous peoples." --Pascual Bernabe Velasquez

Listen to March 5th interview at:

www.nativeamericacalling.com/nac_past.shtml

In this way, the tour presented an opportunity for exchanges between the Assembly and others to learn from each other. While meeting with the Xicana/Raza youth from MECHA at UC Berkeley, Pascual told them, **“the youth are motivating me”**. When Pascual spoke of the civil war in Guatemala as 500 years long, one participant commented, “I expected you say 30 plus years but when you said 500, you expanded my entire view of history and how it is connected to the present”.

We were also excited to connect with our allies in Central America solidarity, coordinating with CISPES during our stops in San Francisco, Portland and Seattle. In joining together we were able to educate our bases, regionalize the issue of mining and strengthen the transnational connections between people in resistance to mining and mega-development.

BI-NATIONAL COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

In Crete, Nebraska, Pascual met with family and community members from Huehuetenango who are currently living and working in the US. The Nebraska community raised funds to bring Pascual so he could share his tour presentation and update the group on current events in Huehuetenango and the plans for mines that could threaten their community lands. The effects of both mining and migration were evident in the room. As Pascual stated, “If there is mining in Guatemala and deportations in the US, where does that leave us?”



Pascual and NISGUA Program Coordinator Bridget Brehen at CARECEN day laborer center in Los Angeles

NISGUA's WORK: *“We have decided we want to take our advocacy from the local to the national and international level; in this sense, NISGUA does the most strategic work.”* –Leader of the Assembly of Huehuetenango
***Pressure the Guatemalan government** to respect community referendums and uphold international laws establishing the rights of indigenous peoples - We collected **1,000 letters from the tour** alone. Contact us to become part of the network for future actions and sign-on letters in solidarity with mining-affected communities. ***Support the Assembly of Huehuetenango in requesting a visit to Guatemala by the United Nations Special Rapporteur’s office on Indigenous People’s issues** in order investigate the violations of indigenous people’s rights. ***Facilitate and strengthen transnational connections**, North-South and within Latin America, between impacted communities. Please contact NISGUA if you're interested in becoming a **Grassroots Campaign Leader**.



Seattle UUCAN activists Anna and Thomas Rudd with Pascual on ferry from Bremerton, WA event

THANK YOU TO OUR 2010 TOUR HOSTS!

“For all the work NISGUA or the Assembly did, we couldn’t have done it without their work.” --Pascual

Albuquerque: Central America Solidarity Network - **Tucson:** Local network of former human rights companions - **Los Angeles area:** Guatemala Education Action Project - **San Francisco/Oakland:** NISGUA and Guatemala News and Information Bureau - **Portland:** Portland Central America Solidarity Committee - **Seattle:** Unitarian Universalist Central America Network - **Omaha area:** Community members from Huehuetenango