

# **"People Over Profit"** **Speakers' Biographies**

## **Luisa Xinico Yos, Land Rights**

Luisa Xinico is a Maya-Kaqchikel land activist who currently serves as the treasurer on the National Council of the National Indigenous and Campesino Coordinator (CONIC - Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina). CONIC's work primarily focuses on land rights for indigenous Maya peasant farmers and respect for human rights to specifically support economic, social and political development in Guatemala. Campesino organizations continue to advocate that the government negotiate resolution to the land crisis. Campesino organizations have taken to the streets in protest and are "recovering" land to draw attention to their situation in hopes that the government will make agrarian issues a priority in the administration. The Berger government has not been responsive to the needs of campesinos; in fact there have been more than 37 land evictions this year alone and 62 are pending. During many evictions, the authorities have used excessive force resulting in injuries and the deaths of several campesinos. Also there have been instances in which campesinos houses and crops have been burned. Such tactics are reminiscent of practices during the scorched earth policy of the civil war. Luisa will speak of the campesino struggle for land.

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## **Arnoldo Yat, Indigenous Rights and Mining**

Arnoldo Yat is a Maya Q'eqchi' trainer for the El Estor Association for Integral Development's (AEPDI) justice program, Defensoría Q'eqchi'. This program focuses on promoting access to the legal system for the Q'eqchi' population in the area of El Estor, Guatemala, including the use of traditional Maya law. The program educates local people about their rights by providing workshops to communities affected by mining concessions. In the Lake Izabal area the Guatemalan government has granted mining concessions to transnational companies without consulting the local population. In 1996 the Guatemalan government signed the United Nations treaty, called ILO 169 which states that indigenous people have the right to "participate in the use, management and conservation" of their lands, as well as reserving the right to reject a governmental mining concession on their lands. The program defends the collective rights of the Q'eqchi' villagers. The Q'eqchi' of the area stand to lose their lands when the mining companies start their operations. For this reason AEPDI is teaching people about ILO 169 and their rights. Aside from working on the mining issue, the Defensoría Q'eqchi' offers mediation services to resolve conflicts and also has a program to training legal interpreters. Arnoldo will speak about the organization's experience in educating local villages regarding the consequences of mining.

## **Rudy Monterroso, Militarization and Impunity**

Rudy Monterroso represents the International Center for Research in Human Rights (CIIDH), founded in 1993 to promote, defend and disseminate information on human rights in Guatemala. The CIIDH monitors Guatemala's defense spending, generates human rights reports, monitors the work of the PDH and the withdrawal of MINUGUA. CIIDH is a member of the Instancia Multi-Institucional por la Paz y la Concordia (the Coalition for Peace and Harmony), which is pressing for the implementation of the truth commission recommendations in Guatemala and working on reparations for victims of the civil war. The CIIDH is also active in a national commission looking for children who were disappeared during the war. Their work in this field consists of contributing to the investigation of cases and reuniting families who have not seen their loved ones for 20 or more years. Rudy will speak about the impacts of militarization on Guatemalan society including the current work of CIIDH in the fight to end impunity.

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## **Carlos Humberto Muralles, CAFTA and Agriculture**

Carlos Humberto Muralles coordinates a team of 20 people in the Production Department of CEIBA, the Association for the Promotion and Development of the Community started as a nongovernmental organization in 1992. CEIBA mostly works in communities in the department of Huehuetenango, located in the mountains of Northwestern Guatemala. CEIBA promotes participatory community development on the topics of health, agriculture production, women's participation, and education. They prioritize their work to communities that were affected by the internal conflict and marginalized, at risk rural communities. Mr. Muralles is an agronomist whose team works on micro credit for agriculture projects, agriculture training in alternative agriculture, biodiversity and on the topic of food security. They also conduct field research on agriculture topics. In recent years CEIBA has focused some of their work on trade and globalization issues including Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and Plan Puebla Panama (PPP). CEIBA is a member of the Mesa Global, a consortium of Guatemalan organizations working against neo-liberal policies.