



Victoria Central America Support Committee: Report July 2019

This is not intended to be a complete report but, rather, a record of some of our most memorable events in recent years of Café Simpatico and other CASC events.

CASC meets on the unceded territory of the Esquimalt-Songhees people and is thankful for their generosity in sharing their land with us. Fernwood Community Association (FCA) has been our home for many years; we remain grateful for its support. Our main outreach is Café Simpatico, on the last Friday of the month from September to May.

EVENTS

One of the highlights of 2018 was a presentation by retired Bishop Demi De Roo on the legacy of Oscar Romero, late Bishop of El Salvador. It was received by a packed house and stimulated a spirited discussion. The presentation may be viewed on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swD1VFX76o0&t=1200s>
We also hosted the book launch of a book about Oscar Romero: *Assassination of a Saint*.

We have held a number of excellent Cafes on Guatemala including a presentation by our own Kay Gimbel and several by Wendy Mendez about HIJOS - children of the murdered and disappeared in Guatemala - as well as about the present situation in that country. Wendy brought us a moving documentary, accompanied by one of the film's participants, on the same subject: *Sin Miedo (Fearless)*, a film by Claudio Zulian.

Honduras has been a subject of concern for CASC and we have had many speakers and slide shows with Kay Gimbel, Bill Feyrer, Phil Little and a wonderful Honduran teacher, Daisy. Last summer we heard a moving talk on the current situation in Honduras at a potluck picnic with Father Melos, a much threatened human rights activist.

Steve Stewart of Co-Dev gave a clear analysis at Café this spring on Canadian foreign policy in both Honduras and Venezuela. We have an audio file of his talk available. Venezuela's neighbor, Peru, was the subject of a film documentary about the impact of oil pipelines on the indigenous communities of the Amazon watershed.

We held a dinner to raise funds for the parents of disappeared students of Guerrero, Mexico. We hosted a special guest, Lucia, a school teacher from Vera Cruz who is bringing indigenous education into the curriculum. We screened a documentary entitled “*¡Zapata vive, la lucha sigue!*” (*Zapata lives, the struggle continues*)

We recently showed for the first time in Canada, a moving film about the lives of three women activists in Mexico City, “*Mujer. Se va la vida, compañera.*”

Because CASC recognizes that social justice and solidarity are indivisible and globally connected we present events from around the world. We held the BC premieres of two films on Western Sahara; a little-known country that was once a Spanish colony, now colonized by Morocco. We also enacted a play set in Palestine entitled: *Stories from the Walled-off Hotel*. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkaZNUePMyA&t=27s>

Closer to home we had a presentation by participants who visited the Peace River to learn about the proposed Site-C dam. In 2019 we sponsored an evening of discussion on Climate Justice, which included our (probably) youngest speaker ever, an articulate 13 year old local student.

CASC is an important part of the social movement life in Victoria and some of our Cafes are co-sponsored with other groups, including, Mining Justice Action Committee, Friends of Western Sahara, Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation and others. We are open to other groups sharing our goals.

MUSIC

Music is an vital of Café, thanks to the initiatives of past member and musician, Nedjo, who returns from Saltspring several times a year to entertain us. We are grateful to Kumbia, Sharon Hazelwood, Tracey Summers and others for their talented contributions. CASC always welcomes the expression of visual art, drama and poetry: the art of resistance.

We are saddened by the loss of long time and faithful members: Bill and Gudrun Doherty, Deirdre Kelly and Peter Golden. Other long time members have taken well-deserved retirement while some have moved away or are too infirm for activity. Over the years we have integrated new members and more are always welcome.

STRUCTURE AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

All CASC work is done by volunteers, giving their time, skills, materials as well as hospitality.

The planning committee meets the first Wednesday of the month, except in summer, in the FCA boardroom at 7:30 pm. All business of CASC is conducted at these meetings including decisions on finance, Cafe' topics, speakers, musicians and use of our equipment (projector, A/V and the Doherty kitchenware). Minutes are taken and are available to members. We have a revolving core group of three + the treasurer for decisions when all members cannot be reached; for instance, signing on to relevant letters and petitions.

We believe that democracy, openness and clear communication are vital for a social movement supporting democracy and openness globally.

All CASC supporters are welcome to attend planning meetings.

We do not have an office or dedicated Email or telephone; supporters can reach us at meetings or by Facebook messages. We are grateful to those who serve our CASC outreach by the internet – Facebook, website and list serves.

FINANCES

We rely on donations from supporters to cover costs that include rent, speaker travel, film rental and honoraria. Along with Saltspring Island volunteers, CASC continues to sell Nicaraguan fair-trade, organic coffee beans, freshly roasted locally. The sale makes a dignified life possible for the Nicaraguan communities from whom we get our beans. A small part of every coffee sale helps fund our activities.

In recent years we have made donations to worker struggles in Guatemala, a human rights radio station in Honduras, necessities for the people travelling on the Central American caravan to the Mex-USA border, progressive media specializing in news from Latin America and other causes relevant to our mission of solidarity with those in struggle for justice and human rights.

Theresa Wolfwood for the CASC planning committee July 2019

<https://www.victoriacasc.org/> <https://www.facebook.com/vcasc/>

Photos from some CASC activites on following pages

