



# New Haven/León Sister City Project

*Winter 2012 E-Newsletter*

## Grassroots Initiative

*By Kristen Koue*

This past July and August I had the opportunity to spend six weeks serving as a Peace and Justice Intern with the New Haven/León Sister City Project (NH/LSCP). Through the internship I gained a solid, experience-based understanding of education and community development efforts and challenges in rural Nicaragua by working closely with NH/LSCP staff, educators, and members of the community of Goyena. During the course of my stay I supported existing enrichment and preschool education programs, lead parent workshops, and conducted teacher professional development trainings. My hope is that this work contributed to the sustainable development of Project's efforts to provide quality educational programming and promote community participation in children's learning throughout Goyena.

I arrived in Nicaragua after nearly a full day of flying- a redeye from San Francisco to Miami, a five hour layover, another flight, but finally I made it. I was greeted at the airport by Luis Chavarria, one of the NH/LSCP staff members. During the ride to León from Managua Luis enthusiastically explained the NH/LSCP's current work and asked me plenty of questions about the projects I'd be doing. He asked me why I had chosen to come to Nicaragua, and specifically to León. I have never been to Central America, I replied. I came to learn about, and experience a new culture. I came to collaborate with an organization that's promoting

education and development...I was also told that there is something called volcano boarding close by that I'd wanted to try.

My work with NH/LSCP began long before I arrived in León, and the NH/LSCP staff in the U.S. and León did a fantastic job of helping me understand the key issues and needs Goyena. But when I arrived in Nicaragua there was lots to learn. I dedicated the first two weeks of my internship to fine-tuning my work plan and building relationships with organization staff and residents of Goyena. Getting to know the staff was easy – they

were warm and welcoming. Their commitment to, and knowledge of, Goyena was impressive. To get to know members of the Goyena community, I met leaders, attended the quarterly parent meeting led by organization staff and the afterschool teachers, met parents and preschool teachers, and worked with students in the afterschool program. While I initially observed the classes, I began tutoring students individually and in small groups and leading lessons less than a week after my arrival.

During my stay I got involved with a number of initiatives. My main project, however, was leading a

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*NH/LSCP supports education and sustainable development in Nicaragua and New Haven.*



From left Afterschool teachers Tatiana Rodriguez, Patricia Moreno, volunteer Cristhiam Betancotatiana, Intern Kristen Koue and Education Coordinator Ivett Fonseca outside the office in León.

series of six workshops, three for preschool parents and three for after school program parents. The workshops focused on activities and strategies related to critical thinking, math and reading. For preschool parents, we focused on fine motor skill development and recognition of shapes, colors, and numbers. The workshops were designed to empower parents by providing them with new skills and information to support their children's learning. To keep parents engaged and encourage participation, I made the workshops interactive

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## Storm Chasing

By Eleanor Marshall

This summer, most small towns around my home in Iowa City canceled their fireworks on the Fourth of July because, after the third day over 100 degrees, local counties instated burn bans. The Iowa River, which I crossed every morning on my way to work, was three feet lower than last year. My neighbors also noticed – talking about their farms, and how they'd manage without the fifth of their corn crop that withered in the heat. The neighbors that didn't farm felt the drought in almost every grocery aisle, with food prices over 50% higher.

This came just four years after disastrous floods of 2008 my community still hasn't recovered from. That year, the summer camp I worked at closed down because the highway was submerged and no one could reach the farm where we held camp, so I spent the summer sandbagging. I know many families that still haven't moved back into their homes, and some never will.

I moved out of Iowa for entirely unrelated reasons – namely, to come here to study - and thought I'd



Eleanor Marshall (2nd from right) with other students and author/activist Bill McKibben at Power Shift in Washington, DC in 2010.

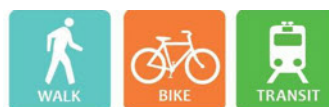
escaped the wily ways of Iowa's water. But just months into my first year at Yale, I missed Hurricane Sandy's dramatic entrance into New York City by a few hours, after staying with my roommate who was stranded there for days. You had to have at least three passengers in your car to leave Brooklyn – the same procedures that were put in place after 9/11. And here in New Haven, Yale canceling school for two days was practically a historic event itself. I wonder if there's a place on earth that hasn't felt a little under the weather over the past couple years – my travels may be limited, but I

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## WBT Street Art: Metamorphosis



As part of NH/LSCP's WalkBikeTransit campaign we exhibited this street art to invite New Haveners to consider the transition from greenhouse gas producing cars to healthier forms of transportation.



## Grassroots

Continued from p.1 and focused on team work. The activities, which ranged from playing memory games, to storytelling, to book making, utilized only materials that could be easily found in the community, like dried beans or a soccer ball. Since many participating parents were illiterate or semi-illiterate and had attended school for only a few years, the activities I presented required little writing and reading. Participants were encouraged to work together on more difficult tasks and, per the Director of Education's (Ivett Fonseca) mandate, the phrase "No puedo" (I can't), was not permitted. Throughout the workshops we stressed that it was imperative for parents to set a strong example for their children by working through difficult tasks with confidence and determination.

After completing the seminar series, we invited parents from the afterschool program to attend a family education day. During the event we played games parents had learned during the workshops, read a story out loud and had the students act it out, and did an art project where students and their parents were asked to create pictures of their families.

Serving as a Peace and Justice intern was an amazing, unforgettable experience. As a student of International Education Development, the internship provided me with an opportunity to utilize the knowledge and skills gained from my professional and academic experiences. Even more importantly, it helped me connect my studies to the real world by supporting the efforts of a grassroots initiative dedicated to building a culture of learning and promote education in the rural, under-resourced community of Goyena.

*Kristen is an International Educational Development M.A. candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University. She has taught in Japan, Peru, Northampton and Oakland. She currently resides in New York, but calls Northern California home.*



## Storm Chasing

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haven't encountered one. I'm not sure quite at what point a series of freak events becomes a pattern of change, but as the storms pile up, there's only so much evidence we can overlook. And don't take my word for it. NASA scientists have definitively linked the occurrence of more and worse extreme weather events to global climate change.

Sandy came from waters that were five degrees warmer than usual, and happened at the end of an extended storm season that makes it more likely for hurricanes to run into low pressure winter storms. Essentially, Frankenstorm could become the norm. And it's possible that some of the flooding that displaced much of New Jersey was actually the water my neighbor's farms needed this summer – as Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change scientists have linked climate change to redistribution of natural weather patterns.

After all, here we are on November 9th, and it's already beginning to look a lot like Christmas, at least a month too early. Three hundred thousand homes that had just had their power restored from the hurricane were plunged back into darkness with yet another unexpectedly destructive storm.

The bottom line is that climate change isn't something that will happen to our grandchildren or to other people in other hemispheres anymore. It is being delivered to our doorsteps in the form of stronger storms and shifting seasons.

We're relatively good at responding to natural disasters when they come – evacuating parts of New York City,

installing curfews on campus. But we're terrible at preparing for them. If we're really concerned about natural disasters, we need more than better infrastructure or sturdier beachfront property. We need fewer cars on the road, fewer planes in the sky, and fewer methane-releasing cows in confined animal feeding operations – and it starts with opting out of them. A community committed to living sustainably is no small potatoes – especially not to the farmers that depend on water for their crops. And after all, where do cars get you when the highway is flooded?

In the end, we need to recognize our role in creating these imperfect storms, and start changing our behavior even on sunny days.

*Eleanor Marshall is a first year student at Yale from Iowa City, Iowa and is an Intern with NH/LSCP this year working on the WalkBikeTransit campaign.*

Mark  
Your  
Calendars

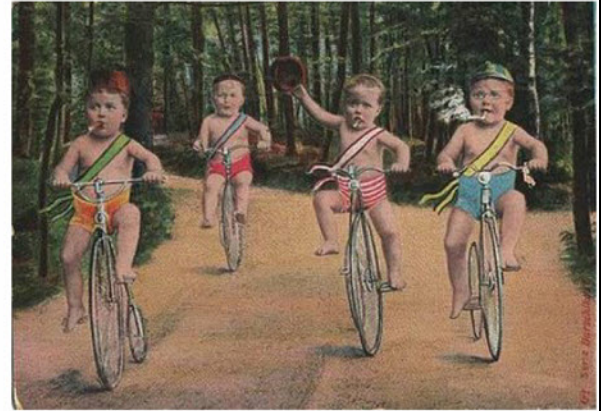


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Advanced Jokers**

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Sunday 3.

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Concrete Justice from  
NYC offering their  
Forum theater. More  
info: Megan  
mfountain@  
newhavenleon.org

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ON APRIL 20TH, 2013**



**JOIN OVER 1000 ENERGIZED RIDERS!!**

**AND IN 2013, PLAN TO STEP IT UP:**

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- COLLECT MORE PLEDGES TO SUPPORT GREAT ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS!

**WATCH YOUR EMAIL FOR ROCK TO ROCK  
LAUNCH COMING IN FEBRUARY.**

**Bittersweet: Dying in the  
Nicaraguan Sugar Fields.**

**Photographs by Brad Horrigan**

February 9 through 23. **Reception  
on Saturday, February 9, 5 until  
7.** The Institute Library . 847 Chapel  
Street . New Haven, CT. Monday  
through Friday, 10:00 to 6:00,  
Saturdays, 11:00 to 2:00



# Radical Inequality and Our Responsibility

by Thomas W. Pogge (excerpted)

(Editor's note: Delegates often wonder why Nicaragua is so poor... This article identifies some of the causes.)

One great challenge to any morally sensitive person today is the extent and severity of global poverty. Among six billion human beings, 790 million lack adequate nutrition... Two hundred and fifty million children aged between 5 and 14 do wage work outside their household - often under harsh or cruel conditions... Roughly one-third of all human deaths, some 50,000 daily, are due to poverty related causes and thus avoidable insofar as poverty is avoidable. If the US had its proportional share of these deaths, poverty would kill some 820,000 of its citizens per year...

There are two ways of conceiving global poverty as a moral challenge to us. We may be failing to fulfill our positive duty to help persons in acute distress. And we may be failing to fulfill our more stringent negative duty *not* to uphold injustice, *not* to contribute to or profit from the unjust impoverishment of others.

Some believe that the mere fact of radical inequality shows a violation of negative duty. Radical inequality may be deemed as involving five elements:

- (1) The worse-off are very badly off in absolute terms.
- (2) They are also very badly off in relative terms - very much worse off than many others.
- (3) The inequality is impervious: it is difficult or impossible for the worse off substantially to improve their lot; and most of the better-off never experience life at the bottom for even a few months and have no vivid idea of what it is like to live in that way.
- (4) The inequality is pervasive: it concerns not merely some aspects of life, such as the climate or access to natural beauty or high culture, but most aspects or all.
- (5) The inequality is avoidable: the better-off can improve the

circumstances of the worse-off without becoming badly off themselves.

The phenomenon of global poverty clearly exemplifies radical inequality as defined. But I doubt that these five conditions suffice to invoke more than a merely positive duty....

But let me here ...examine what further conditions must be satisfied for radical inequality to manifest an injustice that involves violation of a negative duty by the better-off. I see three plausible approaches to this question, invoking three different grounds of injustice: the effects of shared institutions, the uncompensated exclusion from the use of natural resources and the effects of a common and violent history.

## The effects of shared institutions.

(6) There is a shared institutional order that is shaped by the better-off and imposed on the worse-off.

(7) This institutional order is implicated in the reproduction of radical inequality in that there is a feasible institutional alternative under which so severe and extensive poverty would not persist.

(8) The radical inequality cannot be traced to extra-social factors (such as genetic handicaps or natural disasters) that, as such, affect different human beings differentially.

## Consider Making a Monthly Donation.

Your steady support will allow NH/LSCP to maximize our impact on the lives of people living in poverty – and to help them change their circumstances for the better. Go to [newhavenleon.org/donation\\_online](http://newhavenleon.org/donation_online) and select *Give Monthly*.



Farmers harvesting corn in Posoltega, Nicaragua

Present radical global inequality meets Condition 6, in that the global poor live within a worldwide states system based on internationally recognized territorial domains, interconnected through a global network of market trade and diplomacy. The presence and relevance of shared institutions is shown by how dramatically we affect the circumstances of the global poor through investments, loans, trade, bribes, military aid, sex tourism, culture exports and much else.

...We must be concerned with how the rules structuring international interactions foreseeably affect the incidence of extreme poverty. The developed countries, thanks to their vastly superior military and economic strength, control these rules and therefore share responsibility for their foreseeable effects. Condition 7 involves tracing the poverty of individuals in an explanatory way to the structure of social institutions. This exercise is familiar in regard to national institutions, whose explanatory importance has been powerfully illustrated by domestic regime changes in China, Eastern Europe and elsewhere. In regard to the global economic order, the exercise is unfamiliar and shunned even by economists. This is due in part, no doubt, to powerful resistance against seeing oneself as connected to the unimaginable deprivations suffered by the global poor.

Global poverty meets Condition 8 insofar as the global poor, if only they had been born into different social circumstances, would be just as able and likely to lead healthy, happy and productive lives as

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## Radical Inequality continued...

the rest of us. The root cause of their suffering is their abysmal social starting position, which does not give them much of a chance to become anything but poor, vulnerable and dependent - unable to give their children a better start than they had had themselves.

### Uncompensated exclusion from the use of natural resources.

Currently, appropriation of wealth from our planet is highly uneven. Affluent people use vastly more of the world's resources, and they do so unilaterally, without giving any compensation to the global poor for their disproportionate consumption. Yes, the affluent often pay for the resources they use, such as imported crude oil. But these payments go to other affluent people, such as the Saudi family or the Nigerian kleptocracy, with very little, if anything, trickling down to the global poor. So the question remains: What entitles a global elite to use up the world's natural resources on mutually agreeable terms while leaving the global poor empty-handed?

The global poor get to share the burdens resulting from the degradation of our natural environment while having to watch helplessly as the affluent distribute the planet's abundant natural wealth among themselves.

### The effects of a common and violent history

The present circumstances of the global poor are significantly shaped by a dramatic period of conquest and colonization, with severe oppression, enslavement, even genocide, through which the native institutions and cultures of

four continents were destroyed or severely traumatized. This is not to say (or to deny) that affluent descendants of those who took part in these crimes bear some special restitutive responsibility toward impoverished descendants of those who were victims of these crimes. The

**Born a European Cow** "...Vijay Jawandhia, a local leader of the farming community in central India laments the fact that cows get an average daily subsidy of US\$2 from governments while World Trade Organization regulations prevent Indian farmers getting the same benefit..." "If I were given a choice, I would like to be born a European cow, but certainly not as an Indian farmer, in my next life... In India, a farmer is a debtor all his life. Post his death, his son inherits his debts and has to borrow money for his father's funeral." Excerpted from Just Transitions: Explorations of Sustainability in and Unfair World, p 138.

thought is rather that we must not uphold extreme inequality in social starting positions when the allocation of these positions depends upon historical processes in which moral principles and legal rules were massively violated. A morally deeply tarnished history should not be allowed to result in radical inequality.

*Thomas Pogge is the Director of the Global Justice Program and the Leitner Professor of Philosophy and International Affairs at Yale University. Excerpted from Journal of Human Development, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2001. Please see the complete article and the author's recommended solution [here](#).*



Recently Oxfam launched a land grabs campaign to call on the World Bank to freeze their investments in large land deals while they find a fairer way that works for the world's poorest people. A coalition called Ekta Parishad embarked on a month long march calling for land rights for the poorest people in India. The good news: they're winning.



### Get Your Senators on the Record Against the Broken "Free Trade" Model

The closed-door 11-country **Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)** negotiations are in full swing -TPP-pushers plan to finish these NAFTA-on-steroids talks in early 2013. While Congress and the public are locked out of TPP negotiations, 600 official U.S. corporate "trade advisors" have access, including the usual suspects—the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Big Pharma, agribusiness monopolists and many more.

But there's an alternative to the dangerous TPP corporatist agenda. Sen. Sherrod Brown's (D-Ohio) 21st Century Trade Agreements Act would stop pacts that offshore U.S. jobs and fill our homes with unsafe imported food and products. And it would open up the negotiating process to oversight so no deals are signed unless Congress says they work for us.

**[Send a Letter Urging Your Senators to Co-sponsor the 21st Century Trade Agreements Act](#)**



## Upcoming 2013... Summer Teachers Delegation and July Biking Delegation



## Intern in Nicaragua

Seeking bright committed people with good Spanish ... to work in rural community ... In education, environment, development, public health, theater, etc...

## Volunteer in New Haven

Help with food security, fundraising, climate change, education, theater, outreach.

Contact Chris at nh@newhavenleon.org or 203.562.1607.

**Board Delegation** Below: Photos from the October Board delegation to León. Top, Susan Power Trucksess with afterschool children; Susan and Patty Nuelsen heading up León street; meeting with staff Ivett Fonseca and Luis Chavarria. Photos by third delegation member Ginger Chapman.

