

# New Haven/León

## Sister City Project

## Fall 2009 E-Newsletter

Social Justice

Community

Education

Delegations

Internships



BUYING THIS...



MAKES THIS HAPPEN

COME TO THE FIESTA  
DECEMBER 5th



NHLSCP staff in León organize clothes donated by León high school Colegio San Ramon for use in Goyena.

### Shabbat in Nicaragua by Jean Silk

Friday, August 14 was a Shabbat the Temple Emanuel delegation to Nicaragua will long remember. At 5 pm, we gathered in our usual meeting spot, Doña Hortensia's patio. We pulled our rocking chairs into a close circle around a little table, a travel set of Shabbat candlesticks in the center. We started our service with songs, Keep Shabbat, Make it Your Own; Oseh Shalom; and Hineh Matov. We held a moment of silence and sent our separate prayers of healing for the MiSheberach. We closed our service with a blessing over a fresh challah we had bought in the supermarket; the fruit of the vine consisted of some Rambutans (fruits related to lychees). As we sang, "Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei peri hagafen," we peeled off the prickly red skin and ate the pearly white fruit within.

Concluding our service, we rushed to our separate host homes.



Jean Silk reading to child in Goyena (above) and Arlene Cohen and David Elkins making candy with community members (below).



For Catholics in León, Friday, August 14 was Purisima. Each family participating in the festival had erected an altar to the Virgin Mary outside their house. The altars varied in degrees of decoration, but most were multi-tiered, draped in blue cloth and lace, and embellished with sparkling lights, candles, and flowers. At 6 pm, the city boomed with firecrackers, and suddenly throngs of people began to stream through the streets. They paused at each front gate, stuck out their hands and shouted, "¿Quién causa tanta alegría?" (Who causes the joy?)

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### Peace and Justice Interns 2009



This past summer, seven people traveled to work with NHLSCP in León. Mira Fishman and Bethany Slifko (far left with Allison of León in between). Sam Purdy (above) helps start a chess club in Goyena. Interns this year taught in the Goyena schools, worked in the after school program, helped in the health clinic, and supported efforts of sugar cane workers in their struggle with Nicaragua Sugar Estates (specifically helped design alternative economic development project and designed a web page for ASOCIVIDA – see [www.assochivida.org](http://www.assochivida.org)). The other interns were Katy Mayall, Tim Druzilla, Scott Wagner and Jen Plaster.



COME TO NICARAGUA .....

Two Upcoming Delegations on Environment and Education....  
Go to [www.newhavenleon.org](http://www.newhavenleon.org) or call 203.562.1607.



# From Goyena to the Green....Taking Action on Climate Change

Over the past year, NHLSCP has been very active working to educate and mobilize people in both the US and Nicaragua on climate change. Below are photos from some of those activities. Starting with Earthathon in April, activity picked up in the Fall as we built up to the October 24th International Day of Climate Action.....



Cyclists (**above left**) gather in September on the Green for start of Climate Action Bike Ride. The eight mile ride publicized the need for climate action. The next week marchers gathered (**center**) at the Sound to begin the Salt Water March from the Sea. Participants carried salt water from the sea and splashed it at key sites to “wake up” institutions involved in setting climate policy, like the Federal Government (**above right**).

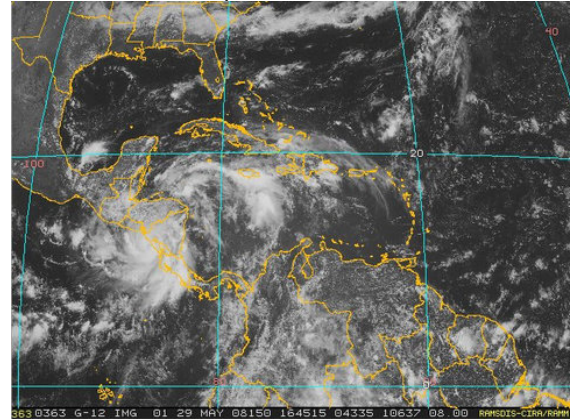


**NHLSCP organized three days of activities** in Goyena, Nicaragua focused on “350” and climate change including a teach-in, and movie, a trash clean up (**left**), and a march through the community. “350” refers to 350 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere which is considered the safe upper limit for this greenhouse gas. The historic average was 290ppm, and were at 391ppm now which is why the arctic is melting, storms are stronger etc. Goyena was displaced by Hurricane Mitch in 1998.



## Why Climate Change??

NHLSCP is focusing more on the environment because of the risks climate change presents to the community where we work in Nicaragua (Goyena). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states, “The combination of low economic growth and high levels of inequality can make large parts of the region’s population very vulnerable to economic and natural stressors, which would not have to be very large to cause great social damage.” And say Dr RK Pachauri, Chair of the IPCC. “The impacts of climate change will fall disproportionately upon developing countries and the poor... within all countries.”



*Hurricane Alma over Central America, 2008.*

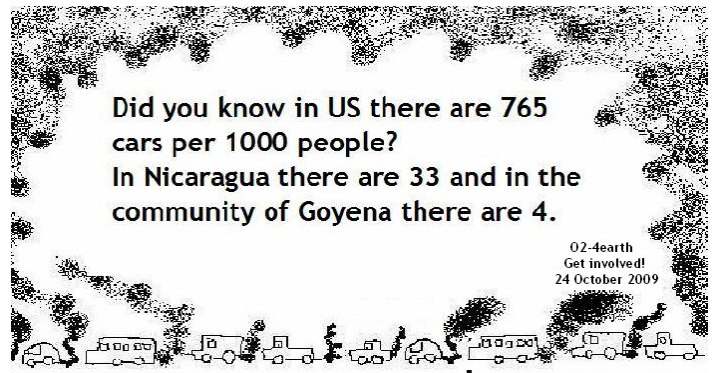


**On windy and rainy October 24<sup>th</sup>**, over 300 people turned out to spell “350” (**above left**) on the Green. It was one of over 5000 “350” actions in 170 countries around the world that day (see [www.350.org](http://www.350.org) for more photos....). Erendira Vanegas, NHLSCP Delegation Coordinator, spoke (**above right**): “Today I’m representing Goyena, a small community in rural Nicaragua. In 1998 Hurricane Mitch hit and left thousands dead in Nicaragua and the community of Goyena had to move from its original location. Due to climate change many innocent people who had no financial resources to protect themselves or overcome such natural disasters died. Thousands of farmers lost everything in a day. We are here today to encourage people to be aware of how we are destroying the world and humanity. I thank all of you for being part of this wonderful activity. Remember that this world is not ours; we borrowed it from our children and all future generations.”



**Volunteers:** Much of the work that gets done in the New Haven office is done by volunteers, from organizing marches to bookkeeping to creating banners to art work to mailings to designing newsletters to translations to outreach....Many thanks to Roger Pahl, Melissa Martinez, Paloma Salazar, Kristen Van Vleck, Louise Miller, Adriana Portal, Lindsay Dillon, Clairelise Rodriguez, Christine Larsen, Shirley and Richard Edwards, Cathy Jackson, Susan Landon, Shelly Altman, and Mary Colwell.

*Right is a flier designed by Paloma Salazar.*



Did you know in US there are 765 cars per 1000 people?  
In Nicaragua there are 33 and in the community of Goyena there are 4.

02-earth  
Get involved!  
24 October 2009

## Nicaragua Sugar Estates Struggle Continues

The struggle between sugar cane workers affected by chronic renal insufficiency (CRI) Nicaragua Sugar Estates (NSEL) is continuing but is presently focused on negotiations between ASOCHIVIDA (association of ex-workers and families) and NSEL. A two year Boston University epidemiological study is scheduled to begin soon, as agreed to in the negotiations. The negotiations also produced an agreement that NSEL will provide some food support to affected families for the duration of the study. Below are some of the highlights from a medical needs assessment performed this past summer by the World Bank/CAO:

- Chronic Renal Insufficiency (CRI) is progressively fatal disease with no cure. 3500 CRI patients currently need treatment
  - To receive social security in Nicaragua a worker must work 104 consecutive weeks – cane work is seasonal – the social security benefit is \$50/month.
  - Nutrition is key to treatment, but many have no income. There is a serious lack of medications.
  - CRI clinic in Chinandega has two doctors who work 4 days/week and 1.5 hours per day. 40 -50 patients are seen each day for about 5 minutes per patient.
  - NSEL gives \$200 per month to the clinic for basic supplies.
  - Hemodialysis costs \$9000 per person per year. Renal transplant costs \$52,000.
  - Nicaragua per capita health care spending \$251
  - Nicaraguan government health care spending per person - \$1.65 per person/year
  - 20 CRI patients at Hospital Espana need Peritoneal Dialysis. The cost for PD \$3-4,000 per month - Total for one year for all 20 - \$840,000.
  - Sugar cane workers earn \$120/month 6 months/year.
- For more information see [www.newhavenleon.org/us\\_solidarity](http://www.newhavenleon.org/us_solidarity)



Above: ASOCHIVIDA members pick up monthly food support. Below: CIEL attorney Kristen Genovese, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left, consulting with community members.



Below, Hopkins /Horace Mann Delegation worked with Goyena residents in June to build a much-needed classroom.



**Shabbat continued....** ...this happiness?). My host mother thrust a huge candy-filled bowl into my arms and told me to respond, "La Concepcion de Maria!" (The conception of Mary). Scrambling to put candy into each outstretched hand, I began to feel literally dizzy, whether because I hadn't eaten, I was struggling with my discomfort at calling out about the Virgin Mary, or I was simply overwhelmed by the number of people coming to the gate, I don't know. People of all ages – babies, teens, men and women – passed by for two hours, until our candy ran out.

Earlier that day, we participated in a ceremony conducted by a local indigenous man. It was difficult to translate the prayer he intoned, in which he asked g\_d to bless us, the visitors, to bring much needed rain to the land so they could plant corn and beans, to bring a solution to the world economic crisis, and to forgive us for the damage we are doing to the earth. Candles burned in pairs on the floor – red, blue, green, black, yellow – representing the earth, sky, water, air, and also the cardinal directions. They also represented historic struggles over land ownership, he explained. We were so moved by his prayer, we wanted to share something with him in return. All Around, Everywhere, Holy Holiness seemed like an appropriate choice, and he smiled warmly as he thanked us for our song.

Traveling to Nicaragua with this Temple Emanuel delegation fulfilled a long-held dream for me, a coming together of my passions – Judaism, international service, education, and Nicaragua. We gathered each evening on Doña Hortensia's patio to reflect on the day's experience, and we took turns leading discussions about Jewish concepts of social justice. Throughout the week, we were asked to explain our beliefs to people in urban and rural communities who had never met a Jew before. It was challenging to find a way to tell them that we don't venerate the Virgin Mary or Jesus or the Holy Spirit in a way that would not offend them. Each of our conversations, though, led to the same conclusion: we are one.

On one Shabbat day in Nicaragua, we participated in three very different religious ceremonies. Each was a profound reminder that, as Martin Luther King said, "We are tied together in a single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." *Jean Silk is President of Temple Emmanuel and a former Executive Director of New Haven/León Sister City Project.*