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/Leon 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 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. Continued on p. 2
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 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

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.

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havent 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. Essentialy, 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,
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 fulfil 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 and select Give Monthly.

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...
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 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.

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.

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

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.
Volunteer in New Haven
Help with food security, fundraising, climate change, education, theater, outreach.
Contact Chris at nh@newhavenleon.org or 203.562.1607.

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

Upcoming 2013…
Summer Teachers Delegation and July Biking Delegation

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