



*(Cover note to Obama letter)*

From: Fr. Bob Bossie [  
Sent: Saturday, December 06, 2008 11:18 AM  
To: 8thdaybulletins@yahoo.com  
Subject: SIGN LETTER TO OBAMA ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA  
SIGN LETTER TO OBAMA ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA

The staff of 8th Day Center has been working with partners in Colombia for more than ten years to stop human rights abuses in that country. To this end, the staff has traveled to Colombia seven times to learn, first-hand, about the struggle of the Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities for their land, culture and the environment. Staff members also have been present in Colombia as part of Solidarity Accompaniment Projects to provide security and stand in solidarity with communities threatened by the Colombian military, paramilitary and guerilla forces, as well as the environmental threats due to the policies of multinational corporations.

Our partners in Colombia awaited the results of our presidential election with great anticipation given the enormous influence the U.S. President has on their lives. Barak Obama's election provides an opportunity for changes in U.S. policies with Colombia. The following letter written by our partners to Obama requests a meeting between him and representatives of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities for the purpose of forming a special bi-national committee aimed at the renewal of cooperation and friendship between the United States and Colombia.

These partners are requesting your help in the following ways.

#### ACTIONS

1. Add your name to this letter to Barak Obama, personally or as an organization, no later than December 15, 2008. (See letter below)

Email your name and address, and/or the name and address of your organization, to Scott Wright at EPICA (Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Carribean)  
swright@EPICA.org

2. Distribute this email to your networks and encourage them to sign the letter.

**MR. BARACK H. OBAMA**  
**President-elect of the United States of America**

On behalf of our African-descendant organizations and communities, of the ancestral land of Africa bringing us together and from which we were brought as slaves and we now share a legacy in the territories of the Americas in the search for freedom and justice with fraternity; on behalf of our victims of murder, forced disappearance and crimes aggrieving the deepest part of our humanity and offending our roots, please receive our congratulations for being elected president by the peoples of the United States.



As victims of violence and dispossession perpetrated by the Colombian state and its paramilitary groups, we have followed as closely as possible the whole situation of your country. We have seen how racist terms have been used against you, which offends human and afro-descendant dignity. We know about the economic crisis facing your country and the situation faced by African-Americans, the poor, and the working and middle classes in the United States.

Your election is a sign of change and hope for humanity and us. It means we may build new relationships among countries, fraternal relationships and cooperation, respectful relationships regarding traditions and cultures, diverse religious practices, and respect for nature and the biodiversity of the planet. We believe that for these changes to be an asset for humanity and African-descendant communities it is important for you to know our initiatives and the extreme, inhuman violent situation we are experiencing due to the unconditional support of former US governments to former Colombian President Pastrana and current Colombian President Uribe.

We believe that if we evoke our ancestors and a global sense of democracy, you could contribute to peace with justice in Colombia and the achievement of justice for Afro-Colombians. This presumes redefining the relationship the US government currently has with the Colombian government, which means directly knowing and supporting the initiatives of the Afro-Colombian communities. This also means a cessation of military aid to the Colombian Army Forces since they continue to be responsible for the violence and paramilitarism attacking our communities. Aid cannot be for war, rather instead for harmony. Investing in war generates unemployment in the US and in Colombia.

It means to open a new dialogue between your government and indigenous peoples, peasants, trade unionists, and the poor, who have been suffering from violence and exclusion by the Uribe government.

It means the cessation of any trade agreement that destroys our territories, denies the possibility of the right to determine the use of our lands, prevents us from preserving the environment and therefore generating more global warming. Likewise, this means revising energy policy between Colombia and the United States.

It means justice and the cessation of the extraditions of the paramilitaries until they tell the truth and return the land taken from us at the expense of the blood of our sons and daughters.

It means developing a common agenda between your government and our communities to invite the guerrilla groups to start a peace dialogue. We do not want there to be any more war.

It means the redefinition of all the USAID policies so they support and respect the food we produce and encourage the exchange and delivery of our surplus production to the poor in the United States. It means supporting the African-American communities and the proposals of such organizations as the Poor People's Campaign for Economic Human Rights to start exchanging experiences on community corner shops, fair trade and community education.

We are very pleased with your election. We dream and hope about your future work in government and believe that changes for the United States, Colombia and humanity can begin with you. There



are ways and proposals that only require the will of your government, the understanding of your advisors and the contribution of private enterprises to change the way that the economy works.

We evoke our common roots and our ancestors who speak to us of unity and the slavery from which we have raised to experience freedom. As Martin Luther King said, today we have a dream. You are part of our blood and you can allow another kind of humanity.

We invite you to listen to our proposals and establish a mechanism for dialogue between our communities and our peoples -- with the participation of Noam Chomsky, François Houtart, Representative D Payne, Representative McGovern, Representative J. Jackson, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, P. Pier Luigi, the Poor People's Campaign for Economic Human Rights, School of the Americas Watch and US organizations that support our work in Washington and Chicago -- with yourself and your advisors in order to promptly define a working group. We wish to meet with you and your advisors to establish a working group as soon as possible.

After this meeting, we propose to define a mechanism for dialogue with your advisors to create a CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING GROUP FOR DEMOCRACY AND PEACE IN COLOMBIA with the participation of your advisors; members of the US Congress, and the participation of two delegates from indigenous organizations, two trade union delegates, two environmentalists; two women, two from black communities and organizations, 2 from the Victims' Movement, 2 from Alternative Networks; Senators Piedad Córdoba, Carlos Gaviria; Alvaro Leyva, Cecilia López and two intellectuals and organizations from the US Civil Society supporting us in Colombia.

For the peace and well being of our communities and on behalf of our ancestors, we hope for a prompt reply, comunidadescolombiaobama@gmail.com, phone 571 3463613 Yahaira Salazar

Yours sincerely,

YAHAIRA SALAZAR

Communities of Self-Determination, Life, and Dignity of Cacarica, CAVIDA

LIGIA MARIA CHAVERRA

Humanitarian and Biodiversity Zone of Curvaradó

MANUEL BLANDON

Humanitarian and Biodiversity Zone of Jiguamiandó

ISABELINO VALENCIA

Community Council of Lower Naya

YEDNNY DAJONES

Young People United for Well-Being in Calima, JUBCA,

LEONARDO RENTERIA

Young People from the Pacific Coast



JULIO CESAR VALENCIA  
Youth in Progress

MANUEL BEDOYA  
National Association of Traditional Fishermen, ANPAC

TRISMILA RENTERIA  
Association of Working Women from the Pacific Coast, ASOMUTRAL

RAFAELA HURTADO  
Plantain Growers Cooperative of Buenaventura, COOMPLAT

GERMAN TULIO SOLIS  
Fishing Port Users Association

Support Network

Justice and Peace Commission  
Network Alternatives

U.S. Signatures were attached to this letter in support..

Response could be directed to:

Scott Wright, Director of EPICA (Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean  
([swright@EPICA.org](mailto:swright@EPICA.org))

Rev. Bob Bossie, 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Justice, Chicago ([bobbossie@gmail.com](mailto:bobbossie@gmail.com))

For more info on Colombia, listen to The 8th Day radio show "The U.S. and Human Rights in  
Colombia" at <http://www.8thdaycenter.org/resources/radioshow.html>

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