

Afro-Colombian Grassroots Leaders Conference and Delegation June 16-22, 2006

Conference: Thirteen Afro-Colombian leaders from the grassroots movement and peace communities will come together to develop a platform of international solidarity that addresses the human rights crisis, humanitarian crisis, and loss of legal title to land that their communities are confronting. This situation is worsening daily in these rural communities and endangers their very existence as an ethnic group beyond the armed conflict. Topics that will be addressed include the illegal appropriation of traditional lands by armed groups and economic actors; threats, massacres, violence perpetrated against their communities and their leaders; the crisis of internal displacement; the impact of US military and fumigation programs; and the truth, justice and reparation challenges related to the demobilization process. Leaders will decide upon a strategy and recommendations document directed at the US Congress. Additionally, they will develop mechanisms of communication, coordination and representation between their communities and guidelines for work with international supporters, the US Congress and international organizations.

Participants: Representatives of the Afro-Colombian movement and resistance communities residing in Chocó, Bogotá, Buenaventura, Cali-Valle del Cauca, Cartagena/Bolivar, Tumaco-Nariño, and Guapi-Cauca.

Meeting to Construct Joint Agenda with African-American Leaders: Afro-Colombian representatives and prominent African-American leaders will meet on Sunday, June 18 to dialogue and begin to formulate a joint agenda that address the key political, human rights, and economic challenges facing Afro-Colombian communities. Prof. Joseph Jordan, jfjordan@email.unc.edu, is coordinating this meeting that will take place at the TransAfrica Forum.

Post-Conference meetings: On June 21, Afro-Colombian leaders will present at a Congressional Briefing organized by Representative Meeks' office, and on June 20, they will attend a reception with the Congressional Black Caucus. They will also participate in public events hosted by Global Rights, TransAfrica Forum, United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). Additional meetings will be arranged with the Organization of American States (OAS), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), World Bank, US Agency for International Development (USAID), US Department of State, congressional offices, the religious sector, and NGOs.

Conference/Delegation organizers: Afro-Colombian organizations in Colombia and their supporters in the US are jointly organizing the conference and delegation. In Colombia, the organizers are the Association for Internally Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES), the Black Communities Process (PCN), and the OBAPO (Organization of Popular Neighborhoods of Chocó). In the US, the organizers are AFRODES USA and members of the Afro-Colombian Working Group (ACWG). AFRODES USA, Global Rights, and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) are serving as the technical secretariat for the delegation.

Donors: Financial support is being provided by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Global Rights, the Inter-American Foundation, the Latin America Working Group, Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), Lutheran World Relief, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Catholic Relief Services, the Stone Center of the University of North Carolina, the Office of International Programs at Benedict College, Afro-Colombians in exile, and private individuals.

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