### Plan:

#### The United States federal government should provide financial assistance to small farmers in Mexico.

### Contention One is Environmental Justice

#### Status quo trade policies have run roughshod over Mexican society perpetuating an ideology that normalizes all forms of suffering—

A. NAFTA was pushed through without consent of Mexican farmers

B. These farmers were told to improve- when they didn’t it was seen as their fault because they didn’t “modernize”

C. People have become desensitized to the type of atrocities that happen to Mexico as a result

Watt in 2010, Lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the University of Sheffield, UK, in ‘10

[Peter, “NAFTA 15 Years on: The Strange Fruits of Neoliberalism”, State of Nature, http://www.stateofnature.org/?p=6369#sthash.7JzbMAGf.dpuf, Winter]

Proponents of free trade and its incarnation in NAFTA justified neoliberal policies by claiming that after an initial ‘shock’ to the economy, life for the majority would soon improve. ‘NAFTA’, claimed Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, ‘really is a beautiful thing’, noting that its principal benefits were due to the low wages received by Mexican workers. [5] Like many arguments presented in favour of free-trade, it was, as Edward Herman comments, ‘immune to evidence’ and disregarded ‘conditions or effects’ on the lives of millions of Mexicans. [6]¶ The human costs of neoliberalism in Mexico were what economists refer to as an ‘externality’. Within the logic of the market, the social costs of a particular business deal are external to the concerns of those trading, unless they affect profit margins. [7] Thus, if corn, bean or coffee farmers can no longer scrape together a living as a result of a policy into which they never had any input, that’s not free-trade’s problem.¶ There being no alternative – at least in the orthodox thought of what Herman dubs ‘Marketspeak’ – GATT, the WTO and NAFTA were introduced to the world as solutions to poverty, rather than its exacerbators. ‘Future historians’, Mark Weisbrot observes,¶ will certainly marvel at how trade, originally a means to obtain what could not be produced locally, became an end in itself. In our age it has become a measure of economic and social progress more important even than the well-being of the people who produce or consume the traded goods. [8]¶ As free-market ideology contrasted with peoples’ lived experience, only a constant barrage of information and commentary on the wonders of the new socio-economic model would ensure that those with stakes in maintaining it would be immune to challenge. For journalist and author Carlos Monsiváis, the role of the Mexican media is to ‘persuade and dissuade Public Opinion, to neutralise “unorthodox inclinations”, to parody expressions of free thought and to convince of the inexistence of alternatives’. [9]¶ Trade agreements such as NAFTA were pushed through by underlining a sense of inevitability, ‘the inexistence of alternatives’ and although the public had no say, free-trade was soon to become a reality whether Mexicans wished it or not. If businesses and farmers failed or ran into debts as a result, this was explained as their failure to modernise, to adapt to the new realities of the global market.¶ Countering this sense of inevitability is a major challenge, because it is this sense that allows for the unthinkable to become acceptable, or at least tolerable. On this, journalist John Gibler comments that,¶ Ideology serves to normalise horrid social relations. With the magic of a well-placed word or two, duly impregnated with ideology, the most absurd and unacceptable of situations are made to seem natural. Ideology tells us that when the Mexican police routinely kill and torture, well, it is part of the rule of law; if twenty million Mexicans live in hunger, their children dying of diarrhoea, well, that is the sad reality of poverty; as nearly half a million Mexicans cross the border into the United States every year seeking their own labour exploitation just to keep their families alive, they are looking for a better life, hence they migrate; if Mexico’s twelve million indigenous people live on the margin of the state, constantly subject to massacres, everyday racism, and the ravage of hunger, well, the indigenous were always like that, even before the Spanish came, that’s the indigenous past. [10]

#### The almost 20 year old NAFTA agreement – has traded away the humanity of workers.

#### Current maquiladora employees in Mexico suffer from a fatal indifference – where corporations care more about rapid production of goods. Workers are become insignificant cogs trapped in the wheels of production.

A. Everyone acknowledges that the working conditions in Mexico are bad but no one talks about to how they go to that place to begin with

B. Workers experience “fatal indifference”- seen as machines which is why they get treated badly- when they try to speak about their working conditions they are silenced by corporations

Arriola - visited several border towns and met privately with mostly female workers - 7 Elvia R., Professor of Law - NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, Seattle Journal for Social Justice, Vo. 5, Issue 2, Spring/Summer

Claudia Ivette-González might still be alive if her employers had not turned her away. The 20-year-old resident of Ciudad Juárez-the Mexican city abutting El Paso, Texas-arrived at her assembly plant job four minutes late one day in October 2001. After management refused to let her into the factory, she started home on foot. A month later, her corpse was discovered buried in a field near a busy Juárez intersection. Next to her lay the bodies of seven other young women. In less than a decade, a city that once had very low homicide statistics now reports that at least 300-400 women and girls were killed between 1994 and 2000. Along with an increase in murder rates, the rates of domestic violence have increased as the border town of Ciudad Juarez has experienced heavy industrialization since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Some murders have fallen into a bizarre serial killer pattern while others have been suspiciously linked to illegal trafficking gangs with money. Others clearly involve abductions of young, female maquiladora workers who never made it to or from work and whose bodies were later found dumped in Lomas de Poleo, the desert that surrounds Ciudad Juárez. Many of the murdered women have been raped, beaten, or mutilated. In Mexico, the maquiladora worker is someone typically without much education or property and is often a migrant from an even poorer region of the country. Thousands of workers in these factories eke out sad lives in shantytowns without water, electricity, or public lighting. Dozens of families may stake out plots of land near public utilities or the industrial parks. There they camp out for years, pirating essential public services and building by hand or hiring itinerant laborers to build a shack out of sticks, cardboard, rags or discarded constructor's platforms. Some make home next to trash dumps. They walk on unpaved stretches of land that flood during storms. Although news of the murders has generated much public discourse about the injustices taking place in Ciudad Juarez, an important factor is constantly overlooked in the discourse. What about the environment allowed the violence to take place? What about the fact that the government is in a cozy relationship with the CEOs of major corporations who come in to Mexico, lease large plots of land, set up factories with 24/7 operating schedules, pay no taxes, do little to make sure the workers they employ will have a roof over their head, a bed to sleep in and enough money to feed their families? What about the fact that the very girl whose body was found mutilated and dumped had worked hard, very hard, for one of those factories trying to improve her lot and that of her family? What of the fact that the same attitude about the murders - we are not responsible - is reflected in the policies of employment that encourage indifference to the workers needs or human rights whether in or out of the factories? This paper argues that the Juarez murders are an extreme manifestation of the systemic patterns of abuse, harassment and violence against women who work in the maquiladoras, whose treatment derives from privileges enjoyed by the investors who employ them pursuant to the North American Free Trade Agreement. I begin by acknowledging that there is a critical relationship between women, gender violence and free trade as noted by Professor Weissman and others, but I also seek to understand how the absence of regulation to benefit workers in standard free trade law and policy perpetuates the degradation of maquiladora workers and produces environments hostile to working women's lives, including discrimination, toxicity in the workplace and threats of fatal assault. The unquestioned right to exploit the mostly female working poor incites gender violence while it makes Mexico a major player in global economic politics, even if rapid industrialization is encouraging more domestic violence and occasional incidents of female murder. I. BEAUTY AND PAIN: GLOBALIZATION AND THE WOMEN OF THE MAQUILADORAS A. Gender and Globalization at the Mexican Border: before and after NAFTA. Globalization today has its fans and its critics. To some, like Thomas Friedman, it is the happy way of the future where people of different nations and cultures will interconnect easily through the Internet, where markets and democracy will flourish and all things stodgy, inefficient and dictatorial (e.g., Communism, Sadam Hussein) will fade. Others are more cautious, calling for better regulatory insight by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other financial players in the politics of free trade. Still others see a deadly combination for nations that make too quick a transition to market economies and democracy. Most contemporary discourse surrounding globalization focuses on the economic theories supporting or rejecting the trend; those who view gender and global trade as crucially related are still in the minority in academic discourse. After observation of the relationship between gender and the operation of the maquiladoras at the Mexican border it is easy to see how gender based attitudes, affect everything from recruitment and hiring (nearly 100% female for workers) to treatment of women in the workplace. When American electrical, television, and stereo component companies such as GE, Sony, and Panasonic, began relocating to Mexico, women were blatantly preferred for the job. Women were seen as better fits; with smaller hands and fingers, they could better assemble tiny parts of export goods such as light bulbs, cassette tapes, and recorders. The ideal maquiladora worker thus emerged as a hybrid of stereotyped images based on sex, race and class - she was not only more docile and passive than Mexican men, but submissive, easily trainable and unlikely to pose problems with union organizing. B. Where the Violence Leading to Murder Begins - The Voices of Experience from Inside the Maquiladoras Over several years I visited several border towns and began to meet privately with mostly female workers and heard about their experiences. I sometimes met workers in their homes, which were uniformly tiny and clean but quite often without flooring, plumbing or more electricity than a single light bulb. "Fatal indifference" is the best way to describe the totality of circumstances suffered by maquiladora workers - a systematic structural disregard by corporations and their agents for the humanity of the laborer. Amparo was 38 and raising two teenage boys. She was desperately trying to keep the older boy in school so that he might avoid the destiny of the working poor - to start working at age 15 in the factories that average 10 hour workdays and little pay. Amparo had been fired for being outspoken about the bad worker treatment at Dimmit Industries, which is now defunct. Amparo was hired at Dimmit to work sitting down for long hours sewing on the waistband to a minimum 1200 pairs of expensive dress slacks per day in order to receive the base weekly wage of 300 pesos and 200 pesos in bonus (about 35 dollars per week). To have a more livable take home paycheck she pushed herself to produce at 150% of the expected quota or about 1800 slacks per day. Everyday Amparo walked out with a blackened face full of lint and dust that escaped the poor ventilation system in the plant. She remembered the terrible coughs she endured almost all of the time as a result of the fibers distinctly visible in the surrounding air that settled on her skin and in her lungs. Then she had to endure the exhaustion of the typical 10-12 hour shift with only a half hour break for lunch and a ten minute break in the morning. Amparo was one of five workers who filed an unfair labor practice charge after she was fired for complaining about the piece work policy that keeps the wages so low. Amparo knew she was in for a long haul by filing a claim, but she said, it was worth it because "I've tolerated them for 8 years." 2. Miserly Wages in Return for exposure to Toxicity. Maria Elena pointed to dark scarred tissue mostly on the upper side of her feet: old scratch marks and evidence of once-ruptured skin, from a year-long period when her feet had first developed an unexplainable fungus infection that had broken and rotted the skin so badly "that my own brothers and sisters would tell me to stay away from them because of the awful smell." The doctors concluded that the condition was so bad that if she did not find a remedy and did not stop working in the environment that had obviously contributed to the infection, she would lose her feet to gangrene. Her mother told her, "although I appreciate the help from your working I don't want you to lose your feet." Maria Elena quit the job where she had been assembling one section of seatbelts over and over for two years, during which she was exposed to fine chemical dust particles in the fabric of the seatbelt that caused a condition without a permanent cure. Maria Elena's condition is only one of a variety of illness and conditions, including back problems, carpel tunnel syndrome, asthma and disabling allergic reactions which typically accompany the privilege of working in a maquiladora. 3. NAFTA: Setting an Agenda for the Global Factories of the World The maquiladoras thrive on the structure of a work week designed to produce the highest levels of output. In the United States, the average work week is 38 to 40 hours. However, in the maquiladoras, the average is 5 to 10 hours longer. Maquiladora workers average 48 hours per week, sometimes 10- and 12-hour shifts, no overtime pay, and, in some factories, only one day off per week. One worker named "Angela," who had arrived from Veracruz seven years earlier, earned 750 pesos per week (about $75.00) and felt grateful not to have to work weekends. She said that her daughter was earning much more, about 950 pesos per week, (about $95.00) but to do this she had to work 12 hour shifts, 6 days per week. As one worker stated: "It's really unreasonable because we work from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. To arrive on time, I have to get up at 5 a.m., and at that hour you really don't feel like eating. At 9:30 they give us 10 minutes for breakfast, and half an hour for lunch at 1 p.m." Global employment then, whether in Mexico or elsewhere, falls into a familiar pattern - one where the policies of worker treatment emphasize rapid production, not worker health and safety or improved living conditions. As some critics note, the new wealth that comes with free trade often benefits a tiny privileged minority not the general population of the poorer country. To care about the workers would entail caring about things that don't factor well in a business driven by commitment to the bottom line, or cost-benefit analysis. The disciplinary methods, the production quotas at any cost, the speed-ups and injuries, punishments for using the bathroom during work time, the exposure to danger instruments or chemicals, all flow directly from the signal by company owners and their agents to supervisors and managers that: Workers' lives are less important than production schedules; and Safety of the workers is another cost that disturbs the projected return from investment. Therefore, adequate safety gear for employees who must work with toxic chemicals, lighting around the factory, security for the workers -- all of these things are not as important as making sure workers do their tasks, supervisors meet the production schedule, and goods are exported and released into the stream of commerce that generates the consumption and the profits that will ultimately line the pockets of the owners and shareholders. These are the consequences of privilege and rights enjoyed by employers under free trade law and policy. It is a policy that doesn't give a damn about workers. The workers, after all, are only an insignificant cog in the wheel of production.

**Specifically, The North American Free Trade Agreement’s promotion of cheap American corn has impoverished small farmers and lead to large-scale agricultural operations that destroy soil, contaminate drinking water and expose people to toxic chemicals.**  
Gonzalez in 2011, Associate Professor, Seattle University School of Law, ’11 [Carmen G., “AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CRITIQUE OF COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, TRADE POLICY, AND THE MEXICAN NEOLIBERAL ECONOMIC REFORMS”, University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law, 32 U. Pa. J. Int'l L. 723, Spring]  
In order to draw lessons from the Mexican experience with agricultural trade liberalization, it is important to assess who wins and who loses as a consequence of this economic reform. In the United States, the main beneficiaries of trade liberalization in the corn sector are large agricultural enterprises that receive generous agricultural subsidies as well as corn exporters, such as Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, that undercut Mexican producers by selling corn on world markets at artificially depressed prices. n163 [\*756] Between 1997 and 2005, for example, U.S. agro-exporters dumped corn on Mexican markets at an average of nineteen percent below the cost of production. n164 These exporters also benefit from the U.S. government's provision of export credits to Mexican importers of U.S. corn in order to increase U.S. market share and help U.S. companies compete against foreign producers. n165 In Mexico, the primary beneficiaries are the importers of U.S. corn, particularly large livestock enterprises (who use the corn for animal feed) and processors of soft drinks (who use corn syrup). n166 The two Mexican firms that dominate tortilla production also benefit from depressed corn prices because their market power has enabled them to raise tortilla prices rather than pass on the lower corn prices to consumers. n167 Indeed, public outcry over soaring tortilla prices and over the hoarding of corn flour by the giant tortilla companies in order to drive prices even higher prompted Mexican President Felipe Calderon to impose price controls on tortillas in early 2007. n168¶ The primary losers from trade liberalization are small farmers and consumers in Mexico, particularly traditional and indigenous [\*757] farmers whose livelihoods have been destroyed by the elimination of tariffs and by U.S. agricultural subsidies. However, human health and the environment in both the United States and Mexico have suffered under this arrangement in ways that are not immediately obvious due to the fact that social and environmental externalities (positive and negative) are not reflected in corn prices.¶ Corn production in the United States is more chemical-intensive than the production of other commodities (such as wheat or soybeans) and it is increasingly expanding into dry areas where irrigation is necessary. n169 As corn production expands to meet Mexican demand, U.S. surface and groundwater supplies are increasingly contaminated by agricultural runoff. n170 The contamination of surface waters by nitrogen-containing fertilizers promotes algae blooms that reduce dissolved oxygen in the water, thereby killing fish and other wildlife. n171 The great quantities of nitrogen carried from the nation's agricultural heartland by the Mississippi River have already produced a "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico, where marine life cannot survive. n172 Likewise, atrazine, the most common herbicide used on corn, disrupts the endocrine system and is known to cause cancer in rats. n173 Exposure to atrazine poses serious risks for farm workers (many of whom are Mexican immigrants), consumers of corn products, and people who use groundwater downstream from fields where corn is cultivated. n174 Chlorpyrifos, the most common insecticide used in corn production, is a neurotoxin that is particularly dangerous to children who are exposed to it at high levels. n175 Finally, the expansion of corn cultivation into Nebraska, Kansas, Texas, and Colorado to meet growing Mexican demand has necessitated the pumping of additional groundwater for irrigation, resulting in [\*758] unsustainable rates of withdrawal from the Ogallala Aquifer and conflicts over water rights. n176¶ In Mexico, the most significant social externality resulting from the drop in corn prices is growing rural poverty, which has increased rural-to-urban migration and threatens the integrity of indigenous and local farming communities. n177 The most significant environmental externality is the threat to agrobiodiversity posed by the out-migration of the farmers who cultivate Mexico's diverse corn varieties. n178¶ The market price for U.S. corn understates the true social cost of production because it neglects to internalize the human health and environmental costs discussed above. Conversely, the market price for Mexican corn fails to take into account the social and environmental benefits of traditional corn cultivation, including the well-being of indigenous communities and the importance for these communities and for the world's food supply of conserving Mexico's diverse corn varieties.¶ As a consequence of trade liberalization, market failures in the United States interface with market failures in Mexico to create a price structure that misidentifies the United States as the most efficient corn producer, thereby increasing harm to human health and the environment in the United States, undermining the sustainable livelihoods of indigenous communities in Mexico, and jeopardizing Mexico's genetic diversity. n179 Economist James Boyce has referred to this phenomenon as the "globalization of market failure." n180¶ [\*759]

#### U.S. agricultural dominance has decimated the rural variety of maize seeds, leading to unsustainable monocultures. This devastates the environment and the quality of public health.

A. Mexican corn is produced as a monoculture- any small crop failure takes out the entirety of the plan

B. Leads to warming, pesticide use, chemical fertilizers, water pollution, deforestation

Gonzalez in 2011 , Associate Professor, Seattle University School of Law, ‘11

[Carmen G., “AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CRITIQUE OF COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, TRADE POLICY, AND THE MEXICAN NEOLIBERAL ECONOMIC REFORMS”, University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law, 32 U. Pa. J. Int'l L. 723, Spring]

5.3. The Conflict between Agro-Export Specialization and Agro-Biodiversity¶ The theory of comparative advantage promotes economic specialization in goods that a country produces relatively more efficiently. For countries well-suited to agricultural production, the theory of comparative advantage would counsel specialization in several primary agricultural commodities and importation of manufactured goods.¶ One of the lessons of the Mexican case study is that extending the principle of specialization from industry to agriculture is fundamentally inconsistent with the agrobiodiversity necessary to protect the integrity of the world's food supply. Cultivating different varieties of corn designed to resist different environmental conditions enables local farmers to diversify their risk in the event of crop failure. This genetic diversity is also essential to the world's plant breeders as they seek to develop new varieties to address the food security challenges of the 21st century, including climate change.¶ The lessons of the Mexican case study are broadly applicable to other crops. One of the great risks posed to small farmers in developing countries and to the resilience of the world's food supply is the pressure to abandon traditional, biodiverse cultivation techniques in favor of uniform seeds, chemical fertilizers, and synthetic pesticides. n221 Indeed, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization reports that seventy-five percent of the world's food crop diversity was lost in the 20th century. n222 Although thousands of food crops have been cultivated since the beginning of agriculture, four crops (corn, wheat, potato, and rice) currently supply sixty percent of the world's dietary energy from [\*769] plants. n223 Furthermore, the genetic base of these crops is alarmingly narrow. Genetically uniform, high-yielding varieties have displaced traditional varieties for 70 percent of the world's corn; 50 percent of the wheat in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; and 75 percent of Asian rice. n224 The replacement of biodiverse agroecosystems by monocultures is destroying the reservoir of genetic diversity necessary to enable local farmers and the global food supply to recover from serious environmental disturbances - including the floods, droughts, and other dislocations associated with climate change. n225¶ The cultivation of uniform crop varieties also increases vulnerability to pest and disease infestation (because different crops and different genetic strains of a particular crop may be more resistant to certain pests), depletes the soil of vital nutrients, requires the use of environmentally harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and impairs human nutrition by reducing the varieties of foods consumed. n226 The expansion of export monocultures as a consequence of agro-export led development strategies promoted by the IMF and the World Bank has imposed severe environmental costs on a wide range of developing countries. These costs include deforestation, unsustainable uses of freshwater resources, agrochemical contamination of groundwater and surface waters, and greater pesticide-related illnesses. n227

#### Corporate rule at the expense of ordinary working people paying the price is the logic that creates poverty, misery and ecological destruction to destroy the planet

A. The thesis of NAFTA is that benefits to the elites is justified even if everyone is treated poorly

B. These type of policies make ecological destruction, loss of value to life, and poverty inev

Lendman 07 (Stephen L, *The Racist War on Immigrants*, 3/29)

No welcome sign is out for the unwanted poor and desperate. At best, they're ignored to subsist on their own. At worst, they're scorned and abused, exploited and discarded like trash or labeled "terrorists" in a post-9/11 world of mass witch-hunt roundups aimed at Muslims because of their faith or country of origin and Latinos coming north to survive the fallout from NAFTA's destructive effects on their lives. Immigrants of color, the wrong faith or from the wrong parts of the world are never greeted warmly in "America the Beautiful" that's only for the privileged and no one else. They're not wanted except to harvest our crops or do the hard, low-pay, no-benefit labor few others will do. The ground rules to come were set straight away in our original Nationalization Act of 1790 establishing the first path to citizenship. It wasn't friendly to the wrong types as permanent status was limited to foreign-born "free white persons" of "good moral character," meaning people like most of us - our culture, countries of origin, religion and skin color. Left out were indentured servants, slaves, free blacks, native Americans being exterminated, and later Asians and Latinos whose "appearance" wasn't as acceptable as the whiteness of English-speaking European Christian settlers and the mix of others from Western European countries like Holland, Germany and Scandinavia. The law scarcely changed for 162 years until the 1870 15th amendment loosened it enough to include blacks by 1875, no longer slaves but hardly free and in 1940 gave Latin Americans the same right. After the war in 1945 it extended it further to Filipinos and Asian Indians. Original native Americans, whose land this was for thousands of years, only were enfranchised and given the right of citizenship in their own land when Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924 after most of them were exterminated in a genocidal process still ongoing, never mentioned in the mainstream, and for which no redress was ever made or likely will be. The 1952 Immigration and Nationality (McCarran-Walter) Act (INA) only grudgingly did what no law before it allowed. For the first time it made individuals of all races eligible for citizenship but imposed strict quotas for those from the Eastern Hemisphere with different standards for Caucasians from the West. But nothing is ever simple and straightforward in "America the Beautiful." In the early Cold War atmosphere of Joe McCarthy's communist witch-hunts, anyone accused of leftist sympathies could be targeted, and any alien so-tagged could be deported, and like today no evidence was needed. From the INA to the present, immigration laws kept changing for better or worse, but one thing was constant. White Christian Western Europeans are welcomed. Others, especially people of color or the wrong religion, get in grudgingly in lesser numbers and receive unequal or harsh treatment when they arrive. The 1996 Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) and Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA)proved it showing Democrat presidents can be as mean and nasty as Republicans, especially with help from a Republican-controlled Congress. The 1996 acts were ugly and repressive ignoring the rights of due process and judicial fairness. They allowed Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agents to detain legal immigrants without bond, deport them without discretionary relief, restrict their access to counsel, bar them from appealing to the courts, and can be applied for even minor offenses little more than youthful indiscretions. These laws under a Democrat president "feel(ing) our pain" showed no more compassion or equity than later ones under George Bush in force today. They allow no second chances and deny targeted legal immigrants their day in court. Their harshness tears apart families unjustly made to suffer by a nation hardening its stance to the wrong kinds of immigrants. They're sent an unwelcome message now much worse in the age of George Bush with his permanent wars on the world and homeland "terrorists" meaning anyone called that on his say alone. It started post-9/11 with the 2001 USA Patriot Act even harsher in its updated Patriot Act II version. Enacted to combat "terrorism," it's done on the border with more guards to spot, detain, arrest and incarcerate Latinos entering the country for a way to survive. For being undocumented and on the pretext of being suspected "terrorists," they may be indefinitely detained or deported the way it works under any despotic national security police state. It's even worse for Muslims, 5000 of whom were rounded up and held early on with only three of them ever being charged with an offense. And it got far worse for them after that still ongoing. Today, federal immigration courts can hold secret hearings for anyone here illegally or charged with a law violation, no matter how minor. Those convicted can then be incarcerated or deported to their country of origin often to face arrest and torture. It's now open season on anyone targeted with legal protection no longer shielding innocent victims Justice Department (DOJ) or Department of Homeland Security (DHS) go after. They includes poor and desperate mostly undocumented Latinos from Mexico and Central America coming el norte because NAFTA, CAFTA and other neoliberal unfair trade agreements called "free" destroyed their ability to earn a living at home leaving them no other choice but come north or perish. It shouldn't be that way, and promises were made early on that "free trade" lifted all boats with higher wages and more jobs. Instead millions of jobs were lost while real wages fell under the effects of a globalized market system crafted for investor elites to profit at the expense of ordinary working people paying the price. They've been devastated since by a sustained massive wealth transfer to the top of the economic pyramid that in the US alone has been a generational process of well over $1 trillion annually to corporations and the richest 1%. For the past 13 years, NAFTA and the rest of globalized trade provided cover for imperialism on the march for power and profit. It prospers from economic and shooting wars of conquest with an engineered race to the bottom driven by giant predatory corporations allied with friendly governments in their service at the expense of ordinary working people paying the price. The result - **mass and growing poverty, human misery, and ecological destruction great enough to threaten the ability of the planet to sustain life.**

#### This form of environmental injustice outweighs any impact on probability and magnitude-we have an obligation to change our decision-making process.

A. Specifically in environmental risk assessment we should prioritize those who feel the greatest impact because “objective” scientists downplay the effect it has on them

B. Those of color are those who are the most affected by environmental injustice because their social location makes them susceptible to experiencing its effects

Verchick in 1996 [Robert, Assistant Professor, University of Missouri -- Kansas City School of Law. J.D., Harvard Law School, 1989, “IN A GREENER VOICE: FEMINIST THEORY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE” 19 Harv. Women's L.J. 23]

Because risk assessment is based on statistical measures of risk, policymakers view it as an accurate and objective tool in establishing environmental standards. n275 The scientific process used to assess risk purports to focus single-mindedly on only one feature of a potential injury: the objective probability of its occurrence. n276 Risk assessors, who consider most value judgments irrelevant in determining statistical risk, seek to banish them at every stage. n277 As a result, the language of risk assessment -- and of related environmental safety standards -- often carry an air of irrebuttable precision and certainty. The EPA, for example, defines the standard acceptable level of risk under Superfund as "10<-6>" -- that is, the probability that one person in a million would develop cancer due to exposure to site contamination. n278 [\*76] Feminism challenges this model of scientific risk assessment on at least three levels. First, feminism questions the assumption that scientific inquiry is value-neutral, that is, free of societal bias or prejudice. n279 Indeed, as many have pointed out, one's perspective unavoidably influences the practice of science. n280 Western science may be infused with its own ideology, perpetuating, in the view of the ecofeminists, cycles of discrimination, domination, and exploitation. n281 Second, even if scientific inquiry by itself were value-neutral, environmental regulation based on such inquiry would still contain subjective elements. Environmental regulation, like any other product of democracy, inevitably reflects elements of subjectivity, compromise, and self-interest. The technocratic language of regulation serves only to "mask, not eliminate, political and social considerations." n282 We have already seen how the subjective decision to prefer white men as subjects for epidemiological study can skew risk assessments against the interests of women and people of color. The focus of many assessments on the risk of cancer deaths, but not, say, the risks of birth defects or miscarriages, is yet another example of how a policymaker's subjective decision of what to look for can influence what is ultimately seen. n283 Once risk data are collected and placed in a statistical form, the ultimate translation of that information into rules and standards of conduct once again reflects value judgments. A safety threshold of one in a million or a preference for "best conventional technology" does not spring from the periodic table, but rather evolves from the application [\*77] of human experience and judgment to scientific information. Whose experience? Whose judgment? Which information? These are the questions that feminism prompts, and they will be discussed shortly. Finally, feminists would argue that questions involving the risk of death and disease should not even aspire to value neutrality. Such decisions -- which affect not only today's generations, but those of the future -- should be made with all related political and moral considerations plainly on the table. n284 In addition, policymakers should look to all perspectives, especially those of society's most vulnerable members, to develop as complete a picture of the moral issues as possible. Debates about scientific risk assessment and public values often appear as a tug of war between the "technicians," who would apply only value-neutral criteria to set regulatory standards, and the "public," who demand that psychological perceptions and contextual factors also be considered. n285 Environmental justice advocates, strongly concerned with the practical experiences of threatened communities, argue convincingly for the latter position. n286 A feminist critique of the issue, however, suggests that the debate is much richer and more complicated than a bipolar view allows. For feminists, the notion of value neutrality simply does not exist. The debate between technicians and the public, according to feminists, is not merely a contest between science and feelings, but a broader discussion about the sets of methods, values, and attitudes to which each group subscribes. Furthermore, feminists might argue, the parties to this discussion divide into more than two categories. Because one's world view is premised on many things, including personal experience, one might expect that subgroups within either category might differ in significant ways from other subgroups. Therefore, feminists would anticipate a broad spectrum of views concerning scientific risk assessment and public values. Intuitively, this makes sense. Certainly scientists disagree among themselves about the hazards of nuclear waste, ozone depletion, and global warming. n287 Many critics have argued that scientists, despite their allegiance [\*78] to rational method, are nonetheless influenced by personal and political views. n288 Similarly, members of the public are a widely divergent group. One would not be surprised to see politicians, land developers, and blue-collar workers disagreeing about environmental standards for essentially non-scientific reasons. Politicians and bureaucrats are two sets of the non-scientific community that affect environmental standards in fundamental ways. Their adherence to vocal, though not always broadly representative, constituencies may lead them to disfavor less advantaged socioeconomic groups when addressing environmental concerns. n289 In order to understand a diversity of risk perception and to see how attitudes and social status affect the risk assessment process, we must return to the feminist inquiry that explores the relationship between attitudes and identity. 1. The Diversity of Risk Perception A recent national survey, conducted by James Flynn, Paul Slovic, and C.K. Mertz, measured the risk perceptions of a group of 1512 people that included numbers of men, women, whites, and non-whites proportional to their ratios in society. n290 Respondents answered questions about the health risks of twenty-five environmental, technological, and "life-style" hazards, including such hazards as ozone depletion, chemical waste, and cigarette smoking. n291 The researchers asked them to rate each hazard as posing "almost no health risk," a "slight health risk," a "moderate health risk," or a "high health risk." The researchers then analyzed [\*79] the responses to determine whether the randomly selected groups of white men, white women, non-white men, and non-white women differed in any way. The researchers found that perceptions of risk generally differed on the lines of gender and race. Women, for instance, perceived greater risk from most hazards than did men. n292 Furthermore, non-whites as a group perceived greater risk from most hazards than did whites. n293 Yet the most striking results appeared when the researchers considered differences in gender and race together. They found that "white males tended to differ from everyone else in their attitudes and perceptions -- on average, they perceived risks as much smaller and much more acceptable than did other people." n294 Indeed, without exception, the pool of white men perceived each of the twenty-five hazards as less risky than did non-white men, white women, or non-white women. n295 Wary that other factors associated with gender or race could be influencing their findings, the researchers later conducted several multiple regression analyses to correct for differences in income, education, political orientation, the presence of children in the home, and age, among others. Yet even after all corrections, "gender, race, and 'white male' [status] remained highly significant predictors" of perceptions of risk. n296 2. Explaining the Diversity From a feminist perspective, these findings are important because they suggest that risk assessors, politicians, and bureaucrats -- the large majority of whom are white men n297 -- may be acting on attitudes about security and risk that women and people of color do not widely share. If this is so, white men, as the "measurers of all things," have crafted a system of environmental protection that is biased toward their subjective understandings of the world. n298 [\*80] Flynn, Slovic, and Mertz speculate that white men's perceptions of risk may differ from those of others because in many ways women and people of color are "more vulnerable, because they benefit less from many of [society's] technologies and institutions, and because they have less power and control." n299 Although Flynn, Slovic, and Mertz are careful to acknowledge that they have not yet tested this hypothesis empirically, their explanation appears consistent with the life experiences of less empowered groups and comports with previous understandings about the roles of control and risk perception. n300 Women and people of color, for instance, are more vulnerable to environmental threat in several ways. Such groups are sometimes more biologically vulnerable than are white men. n301 People of color are more likely to live near hazardous waste sites, to breathe dirty air in urban communities, and to be otherwise exposed to environmental harm. n302 Women, because of their traditional role as primary caretakers, are more likely to be aware of the vulnerabilities of their children. n303 It makes sense that such vulnerabilities would give rise to increased fear about risk. It is also very likely that women and people of color believe they benefit less from the technical institutions that create toxic byproducts. n304 Further, people may be more likely to discount risk if they feel somehow compensated for the activity. n305 For this reason, Americans worry relatively little about driving automobiles, an activity with enormous advantages in our large country but one that claims tens of thousands of lives per year. The researchers' final hypothesis -- that differences in perception can be explained by the lack of "power and control" exercised by women and people of color -- suggests the importance that such factors as voluntariness and control over risk play in shaping perceptions. [\*81] Risk perception research frequently emphasizes the significance of voluntariness in evaluating risk. Thus, a person may view water-skiing as less risky than breathing polluted air because the former is accepted voluntarily. n306 Voluntary risks are viewed as more acceptable in part because they are products of autonomous choice. n307 A risk accepted voluntarily is also one from which a person is more likely to derive an individual benefit and one over which a person is more likely to retain some kind of control. n308 Some studies have found that people prefer voluntary risks to involuntary risks by a factor of 1000 to 1. n309 Although environmental risks are generally viewed as involuntary risks to a certain degree, choice plays a role in assuming risks. White men are still more likely to exercise some degree of choice in assuming environmental risks than other groups. Communities of color face greater difficulty in avoiding the placement of hazardous facilities in their neighborhoods and are more likely to live in areas with polluted air and lead contamination. n310 Families of color wishing to buy their way out of such polluted neighborhoods often find their mobility limited by housing discrimination, redlining by banks, and residential segregation. n311 The workplace similarly presents workers exposed to toxic hazards (a disproportionate number of whom are minorities) n312 with impossible choices between health and work, or between sterilization and demotion. n313 Just as marginalized groups have less choice in determining the degree of risk they will assume, they may feel less control over the risks they face. "Whether or not the risk is assumed voluntarily, people have greater [\*82] fear of activities with risks that appear to be outside their individual control." n314 For this reason, people often fear flying in an airplane more than driving a car, even though flying is statistically safer. n315 If white men are more complacent about public risks, it is perhaps because they are more likely to have their hands on the steering wheel when such risks are imposed. White men still control the major political and business institutions in this country. n316 They also dominate the sciences n317 and make up the vast majority of management staff at environmental agencies. n318 Women and people of color see this disparity and often lament their back-seat role in shaping environmental policy. n319 Thus, many people of color in the environmental justice movement believe that environmental laws work to their disadvantage by design. n320 [\*83] The toxic rivers of Mississippi's "Cancer Alley," n321 the extensive poisoning of rural Indian land, n322 and the mismanaged cleanup of the weapons manufacturing site in Hanford, Washington n323 only promote the feeling that environmental policy in the United States sacrifices the weak for the benefit of the strong. In addition, the catastrophic potential that groups other than white men associate with a risk may explain the perception gap between those groups and white males. Studies of risk perception show that, in general, individuals harbor particularly great fears of catastrophe. n324 For this reason, earthquakes, terrorist bombings, and other disasters in which high concentrations of people are killed or injured prove particularly disturbing to the lay public. Local environmental threats involving toxic dumps, aging smelters, or poisoned wells also produce high concentrations of localized harm that can appear catastrophic to those involved. n325 Some commentators contend that the catastrophic potential of a risk should influence risk assessment in only minimal ways. n326 Considering public fear of catastrophes, they argue, will irrationally lead policymakers to battle more dramatic but statistically less threatening hazards, while accepting more harmful but more mundane hazards. n327 [\*84] At least two reasons explain why the catastrophic potential of environmental hazards must be given weight in risk assessment. First, concentrated and localized environmental hazards do not simply harm individuals, they erode family ties and community relationships. An onslaught of miscarriages or birth defects in a neighborhood, for instance, will create community-wide stress that will debilitate the neighborhood in emotional, sociological, and economic ways. n328 To ignore this communal harm is to underestimate severely the true risk involved. n329 Second, because concentrated and localized environmental hazards tend to be unevenly distributed on the basis of race and income level, any resulting mass injury to a threatened population takes on profound moral character. For this reason, Native Americans often characterize the military's poisoning of Indian land as genocide. n330 [\*85] 3.

### Contention Two is Solvency

#### United States aid to Mexican small farmers can address rural poverty and dispossession—The plan represents a radical shift in the foreign policy toward Mexico.

A. Sustainable small farming is key to addressing the biggest factor of poverty in Mexico

B. Improving productivity, profitability, and sustainability is key to getting Mexico and other organizations to hop on board

C. Creates a shift in how we deal with Mexican policy that lays the framework for lasting agreements

Wainer in 11 immigration policy analyst for Bread for the World Institute, in ‘11

[Andrew, “Development and Migration In Rural Mexico”, Bread for the World Institute, Brief No. 11, January]

Mexico’s countryside is one of the most promising environments to invest in rural development to reduce migration pressures. Mexico has the¶ 14th largest economy in the world, but it is also¶ extraordinarily unequal.22 Depending on the measure, between one third and half of Mexicans are considered poor and up to 18 percent live in extreme poverty, unable to meet their basic food needs.23 Reducing migration pressures will require development and job creation throughout Mexico, but poverty and international¶ migration are particularly concentrated in the¶ countryside. Although about a quarter of all Mexicans live¶ in rural areas, 60 percent of Mexico’s extreme poor are rural¶ and 44 percent of all of Mexico’s international migration¶ originates in rural communities (see Figure 2).24¶ This means that more than half of rural Mexicans live¶ in poverty and 25 percent live in extreme poverty.25 As one¶ expert states, “Rural poverty is one … of the principal “pushfactors”¶ in Mexican migration to the United States” and thus¶ should be the primary focus of development efforts aimed at¶ reducing migration pressures.26¶ After decades of declining support among international¶ assistance agencies,27 agriculture and rural development is now re-emerging as a vital development focus. The World¶ Bank’s 2008 World Development Report states, “Agriculture¶ continues to be a fundamental instrument for sustainable¶ development and poverty reduction.”28 Research has also¶ found that agriculture is one of the best returns on investment¶ in terms of poverty-reduction spending.29 For example,¶ each 1 percent increase in crop productivity in Asia reduces¶ the number of poor people by half a percent. This correlation¶ also holds for middle-income countries such as Mexico.30 Among the options for agricultural development, support for smallholder farmers is the most promising path for poverty reduction. The World Bank states, “Improving the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of smallholder farming is the main pathway out of poverty in using agriculture for development.”31 And smallholder farmers in Mexico are¶ especially in need of assistance. After decades of declining support from the Mexican government and increased competition from subsidized U.S. producers under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), small-Mexican farmers have found it increasingly difficult to make a living.¶ NAFTA and Mexican Small Farmers¶ After defaulting on its foreign debt in August 1982, the¶ Mexican government began a major shift in its development¶ strategy from a protectionist, state-run model that nurtured¶ domestic consumption and industrialization to a more market-¶ based model focused on cutting government spending¶ and encouraging exports, all with the aim of reducing debt,¶ inflation, and currency instability.32 Although the reforms of¶ the 1980s were aimed at stabilizing the economy, the shift¶ in economic model was wrenching for Mexicans. The 1980s¶ saw falling wages, a decline in living standards, job displacement,¶ and lowered prospects for economic mobility¶ The impact on small farmers was particularly harmful. In¶ addition to a reduction in state support, small and mediumsized¶ producers faced the cumulative impact of long-term¶ drought, multiple economic crises, increased competition¶ from U.S. producers, falling agricultural commodity prices¶ and increases in the price of agricultural inputs, and reduced access to credit. Mexico’s rural population decreased from 58 percent in 1950 to 25 percent in 2005. While many of the rural poor migrated to Mexico’s overcrowded cities, others opted for the United States.33¶ The 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)¶ was the culmination of the economic liberalization that¶ began in the 1980s. NAFTA was touted as a Mexican job-creation program that would slow immigration. But NAFTA’s policies reinforced support for large, export-oriented producers at the cost of small farmers, and rural employment continued to diminish. Between 1991 and 2007 Mexico lost 20¶ percent (2.1 million) of its agricultural jobs. The loss of rural jobs and the inability to generate income impacted family farms in particular: non-salaried agricultural family employment declined 58 percent between 1991 and 2007. Many of these displaced farmers ended up in the United States, sometimes working in U.S. agriculture as field laborers.34¶ After NAFTA, the operation of the Mexican small family¶ farm became the vocation of older Mexicans, while youth¶ migrated to the cities or the United States. Almost a quarter of rural Mexicans ages 15-24 in 1990 had left by 2000. Throughout 30 years of increasing emigration, the Mexican government also has done little to slow the exodus. Its leading¶ program for small agricultural producers—PROCAMPO—¶ does not target areas of high migration.35¶ Although the Mexican government is primarily responsible for addressing the country’s rural poverty, the United States can provide critical support for programs that address migration pressures at their source. Because of its potential for long-term impact, such a strategy requires commensurate, sustained policy attention and resources. Furthermore, by supporting economic development projects with rural Mexican organizations, Mexican government agencies—particularly at the local and regional levels—can be drawn into development projects that reduce migration pressures. A comprehensive, smallholder-based approach to development would by its very nature generate rural employment. Without support for Mexico’s small and medium farmers,¶ the country’s rural economy will continue to be increasingly dependent on migration and remittances. While the link¶ between supporting smallholder farmers and poverty reduction¶ is proven, the next logical step with respect to its impact¶ on migration pressures is less recognized.36

#### Current policies are focused purely on maintaining smooth flows of trade. This locks in conditions of economic and social instability in Mexico—The plan is key to overcome the factors that cause FORCED migration and change the decision process.

A. Status quo focuses us in on Mexican immigration- but they leave because there is inequality in Mexico- because we see them leaving we think it means that they have net better opportunities- in reality structural violence in Mexico continues

B. The only way to overcome factors that make them leave in the first place we have to address job development and poverty reduction

Wainer in 2011, immigration policy analyst for Bread for the World Institute, in ‘11

[Andrew, “Development and Migration In Rural Mexico”, Bread for the World Institute, Brief No. 11, January]

As the source of 60 percent of all unauthorized immigration¶ to the United States, Mexico is unrivaled¶ as in its importance to U.S. immigration policy¶ (see Figure 1).1 Recognizing this, the U.S. government’s primary¶ response has been reinforcing the country’s 1,969-mile¶ border with its southern neighbor. While this is popular with¶ the public, it hasn’t stopped unauthorized immigration.2¶ Although unauthorized immigration has decreased in recent¶ years, most experts attribute that primarily to the loss¶ of available jobs in the United States rather than increased¶ spending on border enforcement.3¶ U.S. spending on immigration enforcement increased¶ from $1 billion to $15 billion between 1990 and 2009. During¶ this time the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population increased¶ from 3 million to almost 12 million.4 Experts recognize¶ that given the pull of higher wages in the United States,¶ it would take unrealistic amounts of personnel and funding–¶ not to mention the use of lethal force–to stop unauthorized¶ immigration through Mexico.5¶ The enforcement-only approach to migration is ineffective¶ because it ignores some of the principal causes of unauthorized¶ migration to the United States: poverty and inequality in Latin America, particularly in Mexico.6 Although¶ every migrant has his or her own story, most of those stories¶ include the inability to find work or earn enough money in¶ their homeland.¶ In a 2010 case study of an immigrant-sending community¶ in Mexico, 61 percent of male migrants reported that¶ economic opportunities–higher wages and more jobs–were¶ the primary motivating factor for migration to the United¶ States.7 As the 2009 United Nations Human Development¶ Report stated, migration “largely reflects people’s need to improve their livelihoods.”8¶ In order to address immigration pressures directly, the United States must consider a more balanced development agenda toward Mexico and other migrant-sending countries¶ in Latin America. This includes elevating the importance of poverty reduction and job-creation projects targeted to migrant-sending communities—particularly in rural Mexico,¶ where poverty and migration are concentrated.9¶ Building sustainable livelihoods in migrant-sending communities not only has the potential to reduce a major cause of immigration to the United States but could also contribute to the fight against violence and lawlessness in Mexico.¶ While the reasons for the violence are complex, poverty and a lack of economic opportunity for Mexican youth certainly¶ facilitate involvement in illicit activity along with out-migration.¶ 10¶ The U.S. government and multilateral organizations such¶ as the United Nations are expressing increased interest in¶ the nexus of development and migration. The U.S. Agency¶ for International Development (USAID) in particular is supporting¶ research on the role that the diaspora can play in¶ their home countries’ development.11¶ In November 2010, U.S. State Department Assistant Secretary¶ Eric P. Schwartz said, “Governments and international¶ organizations must also better anticipate the impact of development¶ programs on the movement of people.”12 These¶ are a promising signs. But policymakers lack models and a¶ process for converting this increased interest into concrete¶ policies and projects that seek to reduce migration pressures¶ in Latin America in general and in Mexico in particular.¶ U.S. Foreign Assistance to Mexico and the¶ Mérida Initiative¶ The U.S. embassy in Mexico City states on its website,¶ “The lack of opportunities to earn a living wage spurs migration—¶ both internal and international.”13 But the U.S. government’s foreign policy response to the causes of immigration¶ matches its domestic policy: an overwhelming focus on security and law enforcement.14¶ Within the U.S. government’s Latin America assistance¶ portfolio, Mexico has traditionally been a low-priority country¶ because of its status as a middle-income nation. Until¶ 2008, Mexico and Central America received 16.2 percent¶ of foreign assistance funds directed toward Latin America.¶ This typically amounted to $60-70 million per year for Mexico,¶ with more than half of that directed to assist Mexico’s¶ fight against international drug trafficking. Mexico received¶ about $27 million per year in foreign assistance for all nonsecurity¶ programs prior to 2008.15¶ In an effort to combat Mexico’s narcotic trafficking organizations,¶ U.S. assistance was dramatically increased in¶ 2008 through the Mérida Initiative, a multi-year $1.8 billion¶ program focused on law enforcement assistance to¶ Mexican (and, to a lesser extent, Central American)¶ security agencies. Through this program, U.S.¶ assistance to Mexico increased from $65 million¶ in fiscal year 2007 to almost $406 million in fiscal¶ year 2008.16 In 2009, total State Department assistance¶ to Mexico was $786.8 million. Of this total¶ assistance package, $753.8 million—96 percent of¶ U.S. funds to Mexico—was directed toward military¶ and drug enforcement assistance. Although¶ it’s dwarfed by the $10 billion annual border enforcement¶ budget, the Mérida Initiative dominates¶ U.S. foreign assistance to Mexico.17¶ In 2009, U.S. development assistance that could be directed toward job-creation projects that reduce migration pressures totaled $11.2 million, or .01 percent of total U.S. assistance (see Table¶ 1 on next page). The Mérida Initiative increased¶ total U.S. assistance to Mexico but decreased the¶ importance of economic development in the overall¶ Mexican foreign assistance agenda.18 There are¶ U.S. government agencies other than the United¶ States Agency for International Development¶ (USAID) and the State Department that focus¶ on poverty reduction and rural development in¶ Latin America, but within the entirety of U.S. foreign assistance to Mexico, poverty reduction and economic development remain a low priority.19¶ USAID’s lack of emphasis on supporting rural¶ Mexico—where poverty and migration are concentrated—¶ is part of a global foreign assistance trend¶ beginning in the 1980s that de-emphasized agricultural¶ development.20¶ In spite of the growing interest, discussion among U.S. policymakers and practitioners on migration and development has largely been theoretical.¶ Other than remittance projects, there are¶ few models of how to design and implement development¶ projects that seek to reduce migration¶ pressures. In order to translate conceptual discussions¶ into practice, policymakers and practitioners need to know what works in terms of development in migrant-sending communities.21

#### Now is a key time for the movement in order to prevent the introduction of genetically modified monocultures. There is energy now.

A. Mexico looking to revolt against Monsanto now

B. US initial investment is key to create the network to fight Monsanto

Mensing ‘13, Alternet Reporter, 5-31-13[Alex, Thousands in Mexico Protest Monsanto by Throwing a Carnival of Corn”, http://www.alternet.org/activism/thousands-mexico-protest-monsanto-throwing-carnival-corn?paging=off]

On May 25, an estimated two million people across 50 countries participated in the global March Against Monsanto. Organizers estimate that these protests against the U.S.-based transnational biotech corporation were one of the largest days of coordinated action in history. Yet, despite the high level of coordination, the local actions were not all orchestrated by professional organizers — and nor were the resulting actions all traditional marches.¶ On Saturday, about 2,000 participants gathered in Mexico City for the Carnaval del Maíz, a “Carnival of Corn” to celebrate Mexico’s rich diversity of native corn, threatened by Monsanto’s plans to introduce a genetically modified variety of the crop. The fact that Mexico’s manifestation of the global March Against Monsanto took the form of a carnival is no coincidence. The current generation of Mexican activists is looking for new strategies to fight for social justice, and the March Against Monsanto provided an opportunity to fuse tradition and innovation into the building blocks for a global food revolution.¶ The beginnings of the action came from an unlikely source: a novice Mexico City activist named Thalía Güido. In early March, Güido found the “March Against Monsanto” Facebook page and learned there was to be a global protest on May 25.¶ “I started to see [actions] in Africa, in Boston, and I said to myself, how can it be that Mexico isn’t listed?” she remembered thinking. After the organizers confirmed that there was nothing yet planned for Mexico, she decided it was time to start planning.¶ She started by contacting student-activists who had belonged to her university’s chapter of Yo Soy 132, a movement that opposes Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto and the nation’s corporate media conglomerate. They liked the idea, so she began reaching out to other organizations.¶ “I started sending emails like crazy,” said Güido.¶ The momentum began building. At the first meeting, there were four participants; by the fourth, the group barely fit in the room. By the week before the event, more than 40 different organizations, as well as independent activists, were involved in the organizing efforts — although no one wore name tags identifying what institution they were coming from. Güido attributes the rapid growth of the planning meetings to the horizontal and citizen-oriented structure of the group, as well as to the carnivalesque nature of the event.¶ “The truth is I don’t want to be an ‘official organizer,’” Güido often told the others. “I want this to grow as a citizen initiative.”¶ Celebrating subversion¶ Another reason the event attracted so much participation is because the target — Monsanto — is one of the largest and most reviled corporations in the world. The global scale of last Saturday’s event reflects the far-reaching influence of and animosity toward Monsanto, which is embroiled in controversies around patent litigation, health concerns, environmental destruction and small farmer oppression.¶ Yet, the corporation’s presence is particularly threatening in Mexico, where much of the rural culture centers on corn production. “It affects everything because our culture revolves around corn,” said farmer and activist Héctor Mendoza Rosas. “And with GMOs what you would have to do is, you wouldn’t be selecting seed, you would be buying it. You wouldn’t be saving seed. You’d have to by all of their stuff.” ¶ This threat to Mexico’s rural agricultural economy and sustainability isn’t new. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect in 1994, cheap corn from the United States has undercut small Mexican farmers’ ability to make a living while maintaining the traditional practices that preserve Mexico’s cultural and biological diversity. But today’s plans to introduce a genetically modified crop threatens the very global future of the crop’s genetic diversity because Mexico is, organizers explained, “the center of origin and diversification of corn.”¶ Monsanto’s presence in Mexico is also seen as an attack, particularly on the nation’s pre-Hispanic cultural values. “There is a very strong nationalism in Mexico based on a mythology,” explained carnival organizer Paula, who chose to share only her first name. “It has always been said that in one way or another, Mexicans come from corn.”¶ The idea for a carnival stemmed from the organizers’ understanding of this pre-Hispanic culture, known as indigenismo, in which these festivals represent challenges to the ruling power.¶ “The carnival in Mexico is subversive,” said Carlos Ventura Callejas. He explained that in the aftermath of the Spanish conquest, indigenous communities used the carnival as a way to preserve traditional religious cultures in the face of imposed Catholicism.¶ “Carnival time is a time to go out and think things that the system doesn’t allow you to think,” said Ventura.¶ So, organizers thought: What better way to go to battle against Monsanto than by having a Carnival of Corn?¶ A break from marches¶ The idea of organizing a carnival instead of a traditional political march was also a strategic decision.¶ “Something I’ve realized since getting more involved in Yo Soy 132 is that protest is now seen as something obsolete,” explained Güido. “So it really has to do with a redefinition, with a change in concept. We’re going to put on a march, but we’re going to do it with a playful theme instead of making it combative… We’re going to have creative spaces for artists.”¶ The strategic emphasis on creating a playful and festive space was, in part, a reaction to the ugly street scene on the day of Enrique Peña Nieto’s inauguration, when thousands massed to protest the presidential imposition. Many of the people involved in organizing the Carnival for Corn remember the bitterness that exploded that day, and both Güido and Ventura saw it as a reason to organize a joyous carnival — especially since the government subsequently rewrote the police protocol for demonstrations, resulting in what Güido described as “an impressive criminalization of protest.”¶ The organizations and individuals involved in the planning sessions set about filling the day’s itinerary with theater, workshops, music and art, permeating the day’s scheduled march and speeches with carnivalesque activities. The organizers also deployed social media and their own livestream channel to spread the word. The message focused on the global aspect of the day of action.¶ At the Carnival of Corn’s press conference two days before the event, Paula began by declaring that the carnival would allow Mexico to “unite our voices” with those in more than 400 cities around the world. Then, on Saturday, the livestream group 5oymexico.org began broadcasting hours before the event in Mexico City began so that they could share video, images and audio from anti-Monsanto actions in places where the protests had already begun.¶ The carnival begins¶ The Carnival of Corn was, at its core, a celebration of Mexican agricultural heritage. Children made seed bombs, known in Spanish as bolitas de vida, out of clay, soil and amaranth seeds.¶ Hundreds participated in a play written by a local playwright that showcased the importance of corn in Mexico and drew a parallel between traditional mythological characters and modern-day actors. Organizers distributed masks and audience-members-turned-actors assumed the role of either Olmecs, an ancient indigenous people from southern Mexico, or the minions of Tlaltecuhtli, pre-Hispanic god of the dead. A figure playing Monsanto used the death-minions to steal native corn from the Olmecs, but in the end the community organized to defeat him.¶ Throughout the day, artists used performance and creativity to inform the carnival’s estimated 2,000 participants about Monsanto. A theater troupe from nearby San Miguel de Allende performed a show illustrating the dangers of Monsanto’s genetically modified crops and the corporation’s business practices. As performer Diana Hoogesteger explained, “Theater is a way to get people to notice you. Once they see you, they listen, and then they can be informed in an entertaining way of the things that are happening in the world.”¶ The carnival attracted both city residents and small farmers from nearby rural communities who saw Monsanto’s presence as a threat to their very livelihood. One participant, Delfino Santillán Castillo, traveled from Zupango, a region about an hour outside of Mexico City. He lamented that he now has trouble selling the native corn seed that he saves every year. He wife also expressed fear, particularly over Monsanto’s exclusive patents.¶ “If a Monsanto seed ends up on our land… they will sue us and take away everything we have,” she said.¶ The two heard about the action through a community radio program that had interviewed one of the Carnival’s organizers. Castillo explained that they prefer the radio over corporate news stations. “The television doesn’t tell the truth,” he said. “It just speaks in favor of the government and nothing else interests it.”¶ The day also attracted people from activist organizations, such as Guillermo Rizo Ornelas, who works with Ecos del Buen Vivir, an organization dedicated to environmental justice, human rights, education and health issues. He called on the government to practice the precautionary principle — the idea that precautionary measures should be taken with potentially harmful activities even if the harmful effects have not yet been clearly proven.¶ After marching to the Monument to the Revolution in downtown Mexico City, the local Food Not Bombs chapters collaborated to nourish the hungry protesters, who continued talking, laughing and performing as they shared what the March Against Monsanto is finally all about: a meal. Presentations by various organizations followed, as well as music by artists including Roco, from one of Mexico City’s most famous urban bands, Maldita Vecindad.¶ At the end of the day, Thalía Güido’s speech echoed what she had expressed throughout the planning process.¶ “This isn’t just a crossroads here in Mexico,” she told journalists. “We’ve created a worldwide network of communication between movements, organizations, people — between everyone who is in favor of the freedom of food and food sovereignty. So we believe that this is really part of a food revolution.”¶ Organizers have not yet planned their next action, but they have their eyes on even more symbolic date: September 29, Mexico’s National Day of Corn.